CONCERNING THE HOLY BIBLE

ITS USE & ABUSE

JOHN S. VAUGHAN

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CONCERNING THE HOLY BIBLE

ITS USE AND ABUSE

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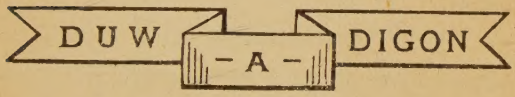
MONSIGNOR JOHN S. VAUGHAN

BISHOP OF SEBASTOPOLIS

AUTHOR OF "LIFE EVERLASTING," "LIFE AFTER DEATH," "FAITH AND FOLLY," "THOUGHTS FOR ALL TIMES," ETC., ETC.



"Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest? How can I understand unless some man show me?" (Acts viii. 31, 2)

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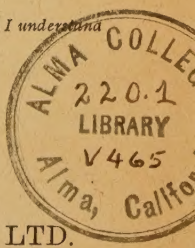

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LETTER TO THE AUTHOR

FROM

HIS EMINENCE

CARDINAL MICHAEL LOGUE,

Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

ARA CŒLI, ARMAGH,
25*th January*, 1904.

MY DEAR MONSIGNOR VAUGHAN,

When I casually read, in the public press, the reports of some of your Discourses on the Holy Bible, it occurred to me that they deserved a wider and more continued circulation than they could possibly receive through the columns of a newspaper. I therefore took the liberty of suggesting to you that, if collected and published in book form, they would furnish most

useful instruction to the people. Now that I have had the advantage of reading through the corrected proofs, I am more deeply convinced that, in republishing the Discourses, you will confer upon numerous readers the boon of a good, solid body of instruction upon a most interesting and absorbing subject. Your book furnishes quite sufficient knowledge, on leading points, to enable the people to read the Sacred Text with intelligence, appreciation and reverence. Though you evidently aim at conveying this knowledge in the simplest and most popular form, still no one can read your Discourses without feeling that they are the fruit of earnest and extensive study.

You are to be congratulated on the success with which you have treated your important subject. You have been judicious in selecting points of great interest, and have shown great skill in

their development. Your reasoning is clear and convincing, your illustrations apt and felicitous and your language lucid and precise. Hence I believe that, for the great body of our people, who have not the time or qualifications for consulting more abstruse works on Biblical Criticism, your book will supply a very obvious want at a very opportune time.

It is true Catholics do not rely on the authority of critics, higher or otherwise, as the foundation of their faith in the Sacred Writings. They rest secure in the conviction that He who, in His bounty, has vouchsafed a revelation to man, has been able, by His providence, to preserve it, whether through the agency of those to whom it was committed under the Old Law, or through the infallible authority of the Church under the New.

The Church, indeed, now as in the past, welcomes and encourages the labours of learned men who employ their vast stores of varied knowledge for the purposes of defending and explaining the Sacred Text; but our belief in its authenticity and inspired character rests not upon their labours, but on the authority of the Church. We can therefore look on, if not without sadness, at least without fear, at the strife which is raging at the present day, wherein the system of private judgment is being driven on to its logical consequences—consequences which, unfortunately, involve the wreck of supernatural faith in the souls of many. We may also regard, with reverential awe, the mysterious ways of God's judgments. We see that the Catholic Church, now as in the past, is the faithful guardian and uncompromising defender of God's

Word, while so many outside her pale, who imagined that, in the Bible, they had an unfailing weapon wherewith to destroy her teaching and subvert her authority, are now engaged in pulling this same Bible to pieces.

But, beyond the sorrow with which charity inspires us to lament the misfortunes of our neighbour, we have no reason for fear or discouragement. We rest firm in the belief and confidence that when so many fanciful conjectures shall have proved groundless, as in the past; when so many gratuitous suppositions shall have vanished; when so many theories ingeniously built up to support a foregone conclusion, that the Bible, in whole or in part, is without supernatural sanction or Divine authority, shall fall to pieces from their intrinsic unsoundness; when the names of the higher critics shall be a bare

memory and their books shall moulder in some forgotten corner of the library, the Word of God shall still live and do His work in the souls of men. In the belief that your little book will contribute much to this salutary work, especially among the humble, the simple and the sincere, I wish it every success and earnestly recommend it to the faithful.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your works of zeal and charity, I am, Dear Monsignor Vaughan,

Yours faithfully,

✠ Michael Cardinal Logue.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

One of the most important efforts made by Pope Leo XIII., during his long and glorious pontificate, was to promote a greater love and esteem for the Holy Scriptures. Not only did he urge upon ecclesiastical students and professors the need of a profounder and a more critical and exhaustive study of the Hebrew, Greek and other texts, but he also strongly recommended the Inspired Volume to the devout use and attentive consideration of all the faithful in general.

In earnest and loving words he exhorted his two hundred and fifty millions of spiritual subjects scattered throughout every land to familiarise

themselves more and more with the Written Word of God. So anxious was he that his advice should be laid to heart that he granted to every one, who should spend a quarter of an hour in reading or meditating on the Holy Book, a special indulgence.

In pondering over the words of this holy Pontiff we are forcibly put in mind of what other saintly men have said on the same subject. "There must be," says St. Basil, "assiduous and constant reading and meditation of the Holy Scriptures, in order to bring out and impress upon the mind the majesty of the hidden truths therein contained."

"To read the Holy Scriptures," exclaims St. Augustine, in his 112th sermon (*De Temp.*), "is to obtain no slight knowledge of Divine beatitude. In the Scriptures, as in a mirror, man can see himself, and what he is, and whither he

is going. Regular reading of the Holy Scriptures elucidates all things, it instils a fear of hell, and lifts up the heart of the devout reader to heavenly joys. He who desires to be ever in the company of God ought to pray and read without ceasing, for when we pray we speak to God, and when we read (the Scriptures) God speaks to us." Indeed St. Anthony of the desert was wont to say that "the Gospel was a letter from God sent to us from heaven," and St. Charles Borromeo had such a respect for it that he was accustomed to read it bare-headed and on his knees, while some of the saints, such as St. Cecilia, for instance, used to carry it in their bosoms, and never allow anything but death to part it from them. St. Jerome's advice to a young widow was "always to read each day a certain fixed number of verses". "Pay God this tribute," he wrote to her, "and never

retire to rest without having first filled the basket of your heart with this provision of sacred verses."

Pius VII., in a Rescript to the Bishops of England, 18th April, 1820, bids them "encourage their subjects to read the Holy Scriptures, because nothing can be more useful, more consoling, or more animating. They serve to confirm the faith, to raise the hope and to inflame the charity of the true Christian."

With these and similar words coming to us from the highest authorities, and still ringing in our ears, we think it may be useful to set before the Catholic public some general account of the Divine Book, together with the vicissitudes through which it has passed, and the abuses as well as the uses to which it has sometimes been put.

To the learned and the leisured we by no means address ourselves. For such

as these innumerable works of great erudition already exist. Our task is a far simpler one, and more befitting our weakness. We address ourselves to the masses of the people—to the multitudes that fill our churches, to the ordinary men and women of the world, to tradesmen, artisans and labourers, whether in field or in factory—in a word, to those many millions of men and women whose occupations allow them little time for deep study and prolonged and wearisome research.

We have done our best to avoid all perplexing, abstruse and recondite questions and contentions (amid which it might be imprudent, if not perilous for us to attempt to thread our way), while the points upon which we have touched we have endeavoured to explain so that every one, who cares to con our words, may readily grasp their drift and meaning.

The kind reception that our other little works have received from thousands both at home and abroad emboldens us to hope that this treatise may secure a like welcome and attain an equal popularity.

We have already received applications for permission to translate this little treatise into French, Italian and Dutch. It is scarcely necessary to say that we were only too glad to accede to such flattering requests.

J. S. V.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PAGE

TITLE-PAGE i

LETTER FROM H. E. CARDINAL MICHAEL LOGUE . . iii

PREFACE ix

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST BIBLE—COPIES—TRANSLATIONS . . . 1

CHAPTER II.

SPECIAL PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . 21

CHAPTER III.

PRIVATE JUDGMENT AND FREE INQUIRY 49

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRITTEN AND THE UNWRITTEN WORD . . . 76

CHAPTER V.

SPECIMEN DIFFICULTIES 98

CHAPTER VI.

EXTERNAL WITNESSES 124

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

Undesigned Coincidences 143

CHAPTER VIII.

Honoured and Dishonoured 156

CHAPTER IX.

The Bible within the Church and outside the Church 176

CHAPTER X.

Inspiration 193

CHAPTER XI.

Interpretation 214

CHAPTER XII.

Trustworthiness of Existing Texts 240

CHAPTER XIII.

The Bible and the Sects 259

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST BIBLE—COPIES—TRANSLATIONS.

It is our wish and fervent desire to see an increase in the number of the approved and persevering labourers in the cause of Holy Scripture; and more especially that those whom Divine grace has called to Holy Orders should day by day, as their state demands, display greater diligence and industry in reading, meditating and explaining it.—POPE LEO XIII., *Providentissimus.*

WE have all grown familiar with the modern up-to-date Bible. The mere mention of its name is enough to bring the portly volume before our imaginations, with its sumptuous leather binding, its great brass clasps and its title printed in letters of glittering gold, yet many of us are, perhaps, but little acquainted with its history and origin. The word Bible probably comes to us through the Greek word *Biblos* (βίβλος), a name given to the inner bark of the papyrus. Before the invention of paper, this substance was commonly used for writing purposes; and, when written upon,

such writings went by the name of "Biblia," or Bibles (*τὰ βιβλία τὰ ἅγια* = the Holy Books), very much as our present journals are called "Papers," because the news is impressed on paper, *e.g.*, the "Evening *Paper*," or the "Daily *Paper*". And, since the Sacred Scriptures were by far the most important and valuable of all these documents, they little by little acquired the exclusive possession of the title; and now form the only books commonly known as "Biblia," or, in current English, "Bibles".

The Bible is indeed a huge, ponderous tome; but, like many other great and important things, its first beginnings were comparatively small and insignificant. It started into being many thousands of years ago, as a mere scroll; for in those days it was not customary to write on ordinary pages, arranged in book form, such as we are familiar with at the present day, but on long slips of papyrus or parchment or leather. These slips, which might vary from a few feet to many yards in length, were, for convenience' sake, wound round cylindrical pieces of wood or sticks. When one wished to read the document, one unfolded the slip, and then continued reading and unfolding, and reading and unfolding,

until at last one arrived at the wooden reel to which the scroll was attached. Then it became necessary to turn the slip round and to continue to read on the reverse side, folding it gradually up as one read, till it was all, once more, neatly wound round in a compact roll.

Had we been living between three and four thousand years ago, and had we asked to examine a copy of the Bible, all we should have had placed in our hands would have been a small scroll of papyrus, written over in strange characters, by a strange hand, and containing the Pentateuch, or the five books of the Bible, attributed to Moses. These writings, though attributed to Moses, must have received some additions from another source, since in Deuteronomy xxxiv. we find an account of the death and burial of Moses, which, for obvious reasons, must have been added by some one else, probably by Joshua. A learned priest, Rev. W. Smith, in his book on the Pentateuch, says: "The incongruity of Moses describing historically his own death has induced *all critics* at the present day to assign chapter xxxiv. to some other hand than his: and the designation of Moses as 'The Man of God,' verse 1, makes it probable

that chapter xxxiii. belongs to the same pen."[1]

At one time the Pentateuch was the only portion of the Bible that existed. It formed the nucleus of the present portly volume. Then other writers, following in the footsteps of Moses, added further contributions, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So that in due course we have Josue, Judges, Ruth, the four books of the Kings, and so on. But the growth of the Bible, by means of these additions, was a very gradual one, extending over a protracted period of many hundreds of years.

From this fact it becomes at once apparent that the Bible is not a book, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but rather a series of books—a little library, in fact—written by different persons, in totally different periods of the world's history, and under most diverse circumstances. When we call to mind that Moses, who began the Bible, was born more than fifteen hundred years *before* the birth of Christ (1571), and that St. John, who completed it with his wonderful Apocalypse, died a hundred years *after* the birth of Christ, we shall realise that, between the covers of the one Bible, we have writings differing in

[1] The Book of Moses, vol. i., p. 23.

age, one from the other, by more than a thousand years.

Now, it may be interesting to observe here, that though each of the inspired writers, in turn, as he came under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, wrote the certain and revealed truth, yet each preserved his own personality, and, as a consequence, his own style, and idioms and mode of speech; so that we find one writer differs very much from another in the form of his composition, and in the purity of his language, in his mode of expression, and so forth; and what is still more deserving of notice, each adapted himself to the customs and habits of speech prevalent in his own particular age and country. His words were addressed to the Jews of his own day, and were intended for the people, and, consequently, it was essential that the writer should express himself in a language "understood of the people". If the expressions were sometimes homely and colloquial, yea, if they were sometimes scientifically inaccurate, and not strictly and objectively true, he nevertheless employed such expressions all the same, so as to place himself on a level with his readers, and to be understood.

Let me point to an instance of what I

mean. Thus, when the prophet Malachias was inspired to speak of the Adorable Sacrifice of the New Law, namely, the Holy Mass, and to foretell the future offering up of that "clean oblation" throughout the entire world, this is how he expressed himself: "From the rising of the sun, even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

Now the statement, as it stands, is perfectly simple and intelligible; but if one is resolved at any price to carp and criticise and *make out a case*, of course one may do so. For instance one might say in feigned astonishment, "Oh! What is this? 'From the rising of the sun,' indeed! How absurd! Why the sun does not rise. The prophet knows not what he is talking about. 'From the rising of the sun, to the going down thereof.' To the 'going down!' What! Does he suppose that the sun goes down? Science has long since exploded such notions. It is not the sun that either rises or sets. These phenomena are due solely to the rotary motion of the earth. It is not the sun, but the earth,

moving on its axis, that produces these phenomena."

Gentle reader, we have no quarrel with science. What it teaches on this point we believe to be perfectly true. We are quite willing to grant that it is not the sun but the earth that moves. But are we therefore to accuse the Bible of falsehood? Nothing of the kind. The explanation is perfectly simple. The writer was not teaching science, nor revealing facts of astronomy. That was not his business. His business was to express a certain truth with regard to the Great Sacrifice of the New Law, and not only to express it, but to express it in such a way that the people might follow him and take in what he said. And though the expression is not scientifically accurate, yet every one knew precisely what was meant. Indeed, had Malachias expressed himself with the accuracy and precision of modern science, no one would have grasped his meaning at all. Had he attempted to clothe his thought in the language of Huxley or Tyndall, he would have succeeded only in puzzling his readers, and in rendering himself wholly unintelligible.

The habits of mind and the expressions of one age differ from those of another, and it is

often difficult for people, even learned people, living now, to catch the exact thought of authors whose compositions were put together under widely different conditions both of time and of place, and amid a wholly dissimilar state of civilisation.

Further, it is not so easy, even for a Hebrew, to get at the precise meaning of a Hebrew document, as it is for us to interpret a document written in our own or in any *modern* tongue, because in its original state nothing but the consonants composing the Hebrew words and sentences appeared on the written page. All their letters are consonants, and they had no signs to represent the vowels. Each reader was expected to supply these for himself, as best he could. In the old Hebrew manuscripts the massive letters which form the line are all, without exception, consonants. It is only in later times that the want of vowels has been supplied by means of dots, or "vowel points," as they are called, placed beneath the consonants. There were no spaces between the words, and no punctuation. Now, where so much is left to the reader, difficulties and differences in the rendering of certain obscure passages are sure to arise. Just imagine how hard it would be

for us to read, if we wrote: **RFTHRWHRT NHVNHLLWDBTHNMTHKNGDM CM,** instead of: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, etc., supplying the missing vowels for ourselves as we went along!

Another very serious difficulty we have to contend with, when dealing with Holy Scripture, arises from the fact that it is impossible to consult the original writings. Why? Well, for the best of all reasons—because they nowhere exist. There is no original manuscript of the Bible extant anywhere throughout the world. All that we now possess are copies. Though the Old Testament writings were written three thousand years and more ago, we have no existing manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament earlier than the ninth or tenth century after Christ. "Over a thousand years separate our earliest Hebrew manuscripts from the date at which the latest of the books contained in them was originally written," says F. G. Kenyon. Probably the oldest manuscript now in existence of any part of the Hebrew Bible is one that was recently acquired by the British Museum, containing the Pentateuch written in book form, and even that is imperfect at the end.

It is not dated (a fact of itself indicative of its antiquity), but is said by experts to be not later than the ninth century after Christ.

From this it follows, that even those who can read Hebrew fluently cannot travel back to the fountain-head, nor drink at the very source of inspiration. That is to say: they cannot consult the original, but must needs be satisfied to study and examine such copies as have come down to us and are still accessible. And even the earliest copies that we have are generally not first-hand copies, *i.e.*, not copies made *directly* from the original. They are in most cases only copies of other and earlier copies.

Consider then to what fresh difficulties, and not merely to difficulties, but to what grave spiritual dangers this would expose us, had we not the living and infallible voice of the Catholic Church to safeguard us, and to declare what is and what is not of faith. With the Church as guide we may contemplate all these sources of error with the utmost composure. Without her infallible assistance we should be in as bad a plight as the Protestant Churches. For, observe, though the original writers were preserved

from all error by the direct assistance of the Holy Ghost, this Divine assistance does not extend to the individual monks or friars, or other scribes, however holy, who sat down, pen in hand, to reproduce the original text. There were thousands and thousands of copyists busily employed in the monasteries and scriptoriums throughout the world. Through want of observation or through carelessness or weariness, or on account of difficult or partially effaced writing, how easy it was to mistake a letter, or to omit a word or a particle; yet such an omission is capable of altogether changing the sense of an entire passage. The accidental dropping of even a single letter may sometimes make a striking difference. I remember the case of a certain celebrity who, some years ago, was surprised to find a mortuary notice written about himself in a daily journal, just as though he were already dead and buried! When the explanation was made, it turned out that an enterprising correspondent had telegraphed that "the Earl of X— had *dined*" on such a day at such a place. But in transmitting the news, the operator omitted the letter "n" in the word dined; so that when it was received at the other end it read: "The Earl of X— had

died" on such a day at such a place, which was not quite the same thing.

Similar mistakes were liable to be made by the copyists of the Hebrew Scriptures. Besides this they were also sometimes incautious enough to introduce into the texts the marginal notes, or commentaries, and so, unconsciously, to add to the words of Holy Scripture. Though these blemishes are very few, considering the enormous number of times copies have been copied and recopied, still we cannot say they are altogether absent. That some errors have in this way found their way into the existing editions of the Scripture is indisputable. For instance, in 2 Paralipomenon xvi. 1 we read that Baasa the King of Israel made war against Juda *in the six and thirtieth year of the Kingdom of Asa.* But in 3 Kings xvi. 8 we are told that Baasa reigned only until the *twenty-sixth year of the Kingdom of Asa.* From this it would seem that Baasa was actively engaged waging war ten years after his body was mouldering in the grave. The difficulty, however, vanishes at once if we suppose that the penman wrote down a *three* instead of a *two* when he copied out chapter xvi. of 2 Paralipomenon.

Again, in 2 Kings xxi. 8 it is stated that

Michol, the daughter of Saul, had *five sons.* That seems a clear and simple statement, and it would be accepted as such were it not that in vi. 23 we read: "Michol, the daughter of Saul, had *no child to the day of her death*". Here, then, we meet what looks like a palpable contradiction. How are we to explain it? Students of the Scriptures have found that it is an error of the copyists, who wrote Michol instead of Merob. Merob being another daughter of Saul, who really had five sons. Hence if we read: "Merob, the daughter of Saul, had five sons"; there is no difficulty and no contradiction.

These two instances will serve to illustrate how errors may creep in through the difficulties of copying old, and often much worn manuscripts, especially when many weary hours are spent in the arduous work. But now let us pass to another difficulty.

We have been speaking of the copies of Holy Scripture; but so far we have been contemplating copies written, in every case, in the language of the original; that is to say, Hebrew copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, and Greek copies of the Greek. But how many of us can read these languages? How many, I wonder, among the millions of the English

people can take up a Hebrew edition of the Bible, and read it fluently and well; or read it even at all? Very few. A ripe scholar here and there, who has made the Bible his especial hobby, might do this; that is all. Most of us have to be content with a translation made, not from the original, please to observe, but from a more or less faithful copy of the original. This removes us yet another step from the sacred writings, as they came from the hands of their inspired authors. We receive them run out of their own mould, so to speak, and run into an English mould. We gain access to them indeed, but it is only through the medium of a translation, or, in many cases, through the medium of a translation of a translation.

This is of course a very serious drawback, and renders it very much more difficult for us to get at the true meaning. It is *almost*, indeed, I should be inclined to say it is *quite* impossible to translate one language into another without losing something at least of the force and vigour and delicacy and shade of meaning of the original. Any one who speaks a foreign language will appreciate this fact, and admit that it is almost hopeless to attempt to render our exact thought in a

foreign tongue. Even in living languages this difficulty is experienced. And what is more, to translate literally, and word for word, will not help us. In fact the more literal the translation is, the more misleading and inaccurate it not unfrequently becomes. Take such a familiar language as French. When we wish to turn a French idiom into English, how difficult it often is to find an exact equivalent! The more literal the translation, the more misleading it often grows, and the more unlike the meaning of the original. Consider the simple French sentence: "Comment vous portez-vous?" Translated literally, and word for word, it would be: "How do you carry yourself?" A rendering which might greatly puzzle a student wholly unacquainted with modern French. "How are you?" or "How do you do?" though not nearly so close a rendering of the actual *words*, is a very much closer rendering of the actual *sense*.

I refer to this merely as an illustration of some of the puzzles and stumbling-blocks that meet us when dealing with translations even from a modern and living language. Those that have to be encountered in reading the old Hebrew text in the form of a translation must, of course, be considerably greater.

The Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew,[1] but the Hebrew of the earlier books, being separated by hundreds of years from the Hebrew of the later books, has, in the interval, undergone many changes and modifications, as every spoken language will do in the course of ages. It is even so with our own. Who to-day, for example, can understand the language of Chaucer? As E. A. Litton observes: "In Hebrew, as in other languages, we can trace growth and progress; from simpler to more complicated, from ruder to more refined forms of speech, from the infancy to the prime, and then to the decline of the language. The style of Moses is not that of David; nor the latter that of Isaiah, still less of Malachi."[2]

For the above reasons, as well as for many others, we may better appreciate the impracticability of attempting to build any creed or any religion upon the *unsupported* text of the Bible alone, and the grotesque absurdity of Protestants asking and expecting every man, however ill-equipped, to make out from its

[1] Parts of Daniel and of Esdras were written in Chaldee; and the Book of Wisdom and the first of Machabees in Greek.

[2] E. A. Litton, p. 20.

inspired pages a system of religion for himself. If even a learned and painstaking student of the Bible, thoroughly acquainted with the history of those times, and with a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac and Greek, and with ample opportunity and abundant leisure, can scarcely deal with the obscure problems that meet him, how is the ordinary man in the street, without culture, without time, and without technical knowledge, to make out the way of salvation for himself, by pondering over a translation of a translation? The task is a Herculean one indeed! Yet, the souls even of the poorest of the poor are as precious in God's sight, and their salvation of as great moment as that of the most gifted student that ever lived. A system of salvation which is not merely modern, but which bestows all the advantages upon the learned and the leisured, is certainly to be rejected. This would indeed be inverting the true and divinely appointed order of things, since we are distinctly assured that it is precisely the poor, possessing little time and little culture, who are the special favourites of God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

It may be interesting, perhaps, before concluding this chapter, to say something about

our own Catholic and English version of the Bible. It generally goes by the name of the Douai Bible, or the "Rhemish and Douai Bible," since it was begun at Rheims and continued and finished at Douai. Owing to the vigorous persecution raging in England at the time, it was impossible for Cardinal Allen and his co-operators to carry on such a work as that in their own country, so they passed over into France. This translation, which is in the hands of almost every English Catholic, is really a translation of a translation. That is to say, the original was put into Latin (generally known as the Vulgate); and then the Latin was put into English, though it was carefully compared with the Greek also. Several reasons are alleged in defence of this course, such as the antiquity of the Vulgate, its correction by St. Jerome according to the Greek, its continuous employment, since that time, in the Church's service; also because it was the version used and expounded by the Fathers; and above all, because the Church, at the Council of Trent, declared it to be authentic.

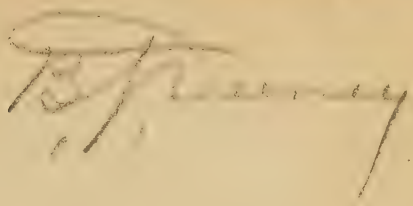
The Sacred Book was, after its translation, enriched by many notes and comments, especially the New Testament: and this was

rendered the more necessary, since the Scripture was now used to support every kind of heresy and false doctrine; so that it became a matter of the utmost importance to warn the faithful against the many erroneous and altogether unwarrantable interpretations that were being foisted upon the various texts.

This fact is alluded to by Cardinal Allen, then President of Douai College, in a Latin letter preserved in the English College at Rome, and addressed in 1578 or 1580 to Vendeville, the Regius Professor of Canon Law. He is speaking of the difficulties which the Catholic priests experienced in preaching, owing to their Authorised Version being in Latin, a language unknown to the bulk of their flock. "When they are preaching," he writes, "to the unlearned, and are obliged, on the spur of the moment, to translate some passage which they have quoted into the vulgar tongue, they often do it inaccurately and with unpleasant hesitation, because either there is no vernacular version of the words, or because it does not then and there occur to them. Our adversaries, on the other hand, have at their fingers' ends, from some heretical version, all those passages of Scripture which seem to make for them, and by a certain

deceptive adaptation and alteration of the sacred words produce the effect of appearing to say nothing but what comes from the Bible. This evil might be remedied if we too had some Catholic version of the Bible, for all the English versions (*i.e.*, non-Catholic) 'are most corrupt'."[1] "The complete Bible was published in 1609-1610 at Douai, whither the College had returned in 1593. The annotations on the Douai Old Testament, which are far less copious than those on the New, and more subdued in language, were prepared by Dr. Worthington, the then President." New editions appeared in 1635, in 1749, and others have appeared at intervals, down to the present time.

[1] Quoted by Jas. Carleton, D.D., p. 15.



CHAPTER II.

SPECIAL PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The Jewish rabbins tell us, *unâ voce*, that all the prophets, none excepted, prophesied only of the years of the redemption and the days of the Messiah. "All from Moses our master," says Maimonides, "to Malachi of blessed memory". "They all," says Abarbanel, "moved by the Holy Ghost, testify and foretell the coming of the Messiah."—*Propædeia Prophetica*, p. 215. By W. R. Lyall, D.D.

The Bible is by far the most remarkable book in the world, and full of the deepest interest to men of all kinds. It is of interest to the antiquary, to the historian, to the man of letters. Even as a literary composition it possesses very considerable merit. The language is often extremely beautiful and the thoughts exalted and sublime. Indeed, the poetry, the eloquence, and the force and dignity of expression, occasionally to be met with in some of the books, have never been surpassed, we might perhaps say, never even approached.

Yet, it is not any one of these things, nor is it even all of them together, that invests the

Bible with its special charm and altogether unique value. The Hebrew Scriptures were written and inspired for a far loftier and more important purpose, and that was to call attention to and to foreshadow the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind ; to point out His advent, and to bear witness to Him, as the Saviour of our fallen and sinful race.

Nothing has ever happened or ever will happen in this world more startling in itself, or more closely bound up with the personal welfare of each one of us, or more wide-reaching in its general consequences, than the coming of God, the Eternal and the Infinite, into this world, in the form of man. It is an event absolutely unique, and without a parallel, and one upon which the supernatural and eternal interests of the entire race are centred.

Now the Old Testament was written for the express purpose of preparing men for His coming. We do not affirm that to have been the sole purpose, but we maintain that it was the main purpose, the chief object and aim of the book, when considered as a whole. Its special function was to point to a Redeemer ; to describe Him, in broad general outlines ;

yes, but also with such accuracy and with such precision and with such minuteness of detail that all, familiar with the sacred writings, should be able to recognise Him at once when, at last, in the fulness of time, He should actually appear.

The types, and figures, and foreshadows of the Redeemer, which are found running like seams of gold throughout the whole rock of the Bible, from beginning to end, are remarkable enough to arrest the attention and to excite the wonder of even the most careless reader. If we take, for instance, such types as Noah, Melchisedek, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samson, David and Solomon, and others, we shall find that each of them, in some exceedingly remarkable respects, typifies Jesus Christ, and foreshadows His life and His actions. Each impersonates Him and represents Him under one or another aspect, and in a manner which clearly indicates a Providence which "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. viii. 1), and a Divine shaping and disposing of the world's history with that special purpose in view. This point would need a treatise to itself, but we have time only to refer to it,

as we wish to direct the attention of the reader to what is yet more singular and yet more important, and that is to the descriptions of the Person of Christ, and to the account of His life, of His Passion, of His death, and burial, and Resurrection, told—be good enough to observe—not by contemporaries—not by observers of His own day and country, who might make shrewd guesses, based on personal observation, and on the general trend of events, much as the weather-wise may foretell a storm, or a drought, but told and committed to writing hundreds and hundreds of years before there were any natural signs or symptoms of His being born into this world at all.

Every important event, every striking circumstance, every remarkable trait in His character, was set down and chronicled by writers who had never once seen Him; who could not have seen Him; who, in fact, lived and died long centuries before His time. These not merely described Him, but they described Him with an accuracy, and a minuteness, and a precision, which suggest rather eye-witnesses or friends and intimates, personally and closely acquainted with Him, than far-off prophets recounting the distant

and invisible future. It is impossible not to be strongly impressed, and intimately convinced of the supernatural character of the document, and of the evident inspiration of its contents, when we bear in mind all the circumstances of the case.

Hence, it is not surprising that, when the scribes and Pharisees and other Jews, blinded with rage and passion and jealousy, refused to regard our Divine Lord as anything more than an arch impostor and deceiver, He simply and calmly directed their attention to the Scriptures; by which, of course, He meant the Old Testament, since, at that date, no other existed. He gently chided them for not at once recognising the miraculous portrait of Himself, so beautifully and accurately traced by patriarch and prophet, in their respective books.

"Ye read the Scriptures," said Jesus Christ, as though He would say, "then cannot you see in Me their fulfilment?" (*Vide* St. John v.)

Since this is a text frequently employed, and almost invariably misapplied by Protestant controversialists, it may be well to pause here for a few minutes, in order to draw out its true meaning and significance.

The words, as originally uttered by our Divine Master, were in the language common to His nation and country, that is to say, they were in Aramaic; but St. John, who wrote them down, has transmitted them to us in Greek. As the sentence stands in our English translations, both in the Catholic and the non-Catholic versions, it reads as though it were an order or a command. The words are: "Search the Scriptures," as though equivalent to: "I command you to search the Scriptures". But if we close our English Bibles, and consult St. John's own words, we shall find that the Greek admits equally of two very different renderings. It may be either a command, *i.e.*, "Search"; or it may be a simple enunciation of a fact, *viz.*, "Ye search the Scriptures". Had we nothing but the bare Greek words to go by, it might be difficult to determine which of these two meanings was the one intended. We should be unable to decide whether our Lord issued a command: I order you to "search the Scriptures," or whether He merely announced a simple fact, *viz.*, You Jews are accustomed to "search the Scriptures".[1] But fortunately

[1] The Protestant Revised Version of 1881 gives both readings.

we have more than the bare words. We have before us the entire context, and the circumstances, and they clearly prove that no command was given, but that a mere statement was made. If we study the whole passage we shall readily admit that *the sense requires* that we should interpret the passage as a simple enunciation of a well-known fact. I will first give the words as they stand, and I will then draw from the context their evident meaning, and then express that meaning in my own way. In St. John v. 39 and 40 the sentence runs as follows: "Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have everlasting life; and the same are they that give testimony of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you may have life."

Consider the circumstances. Our Lord was complaining that, though His Heavenly Father in the Old Testament had borne witness to Him (v. 37),[1] yet the Jews refused to acknowledge Him as the Messias, whom the Father had sent. Christ not merely knew that the Scriptures contained proofs of His divinity,

[1] "*The Father Himself hath borne witness of me.*" Cyrillus, Theophylactus, Bede, Euthymius and others are of opinion that Christ, in this verse, is alluding to the testimony contained in the law and the prophets.

and that they pointed Him out with the utmost precision as the world's Redeemer, but He explicitly declared this, saying: "These (Scriptures) are they that bear witness of Me" (v. 39). Nevertheless the Jews would not accept Him; but sought rather to put Him to death. Whereupon he animadverts upon their unreasonable behaviour, saying: "You who now accuse Me are accustomed to search and to study the Scriptures, and you profess to believe them, and to be guided by them, and to look upon them as the source of your spiritual life, and yet, though these Scriptures plainly tell you that I and no other am the fountain of grace and salvation, yet you will not obey the Scriptures; you will not come to Me, as they admonish you to do, in order that you may have eternal life; but, on the contrary, you turn upon Me and treat Me as a blasphemer". Our Lord was really reproaching them because, whereas they read the Scriptures, and were therefore familiar with the evidence and the proofs therein contained, they nevertheless refused to be influenced, and stubbornly closed their eyes to their teaching. It reminds one of another sentence which He once addressed to the Sadducees: "Ye do

err, *not knowing* (*i.e.*, not understanding) *the Scriptures*, nor the power of God".

But here we may ask: How do the Scriptures point out and proclaim Christ as the Messias and the Saviour of the world? We shall see. But before selecting some among the chief passages, it will be well to call attention to the nature and the general character of the evidence, and it will then be seen that it is of quite exceptional cogency. For the purpose of illustration, and that the indulgent reader may more easily estimate its force and value, we will first make a supposition, and then apply it. Suppose then, a certain man, the father of seven children, were to meet, for the first time in his life, a sage of venerable aspect, and with a great reputation for sanctity. And suppose this old sage were to say to the father, "I have never seen you before, it is true, nor heard of you, nor read of you, yet I know all about you; and in proof of this I will tell you a few facts about yourself. You have seven children, three are sons and four are daughters; and they are of such and such ages; and their names are so and so." Well; if these statements were in accordance with the facts, the father would open his eyes very wide, and be exceedingly

puzzled and astonished. Still, he might say to himself, perhaps the reputed saint is no saint at all. He may be guessing ; or he may have found out my family history from friends. And thus the father might still be incredulous.

But suppose the old sage went on to say : "Now I will tell you something concerning your future. On the twelfth day of December, exactly two years hence, you will have another child born to you. It will be a girl with blue eyes and golden hair. She will be supremely beautiful, except that one of her hands will be deformed, for her right hand will have but three fingers. And, mark my words, when she is three months old, she will be stolen by gipsies, and you will hear nothing of her for some years ; then, at the age of ten she will be recovered, but by that time her mother will have been killed by a motor car ; and you will have married again," and so forth. Well ! the father might be ever so incredulous, until these predictions were verified ; and very rightly. But suppose, further, that two years later, and on the very day named, a child really was born to him, and answered exactly to the description. Supposing her eyes and hair were what had been foretold, and that the right hand was really deformed, and that

in spite of all their care and watchfulness the child really was stolen when exactly three months old, and so on with the rest. Surely the father would cease to be incredulous, and would argue that the old man was indeed in communication with Him to whom the future is as the present, and with whom the invisible and the contingent are as well known as the visible and the actual. And if the venerable sage made any further statements concerning the yet more distant future, such statements, even though as yet unfulfilled, would nevertheless be believed, on the ground that his previous statements had actually come to pass in every particular, just as he had predicted.

Now, this purely fanciful tale will help us to understand *why* we feel compelled to believe that the writers of Holy Scripture must have been enlightened and directed by God Himself, who alone can look into the dark womb of Time, and see what it will bring forth. Instead of the child I have been supposing, we must substitute the Divine Child, Jesus Christ, and instead of the old sage, we must substitute the patriarchs and the prophets, and the seers of the Hebrew Bible; and instead of the interval of a few years between the prediction and its fulfilment, we

must place an interval of hundreds and hundreds of years.

Many centuries before Christ appeared, and therefore ages before any one could form any conception whatsoever as to the manner of His coming, or as to His character and condition, all these circumstances were set forth and announced to the chosen people, and committed to writing. And what makes these announcements so immeasurably more astounding and marvellous is the fact that they are not made by one person nor at one time, nor in one place, but partly by one person, and partly by another, and in many different places, and at totally different periods, yet all fit into one another, like the pieces of a child's puzzle, and together make up a perfect image of Jesus Christ.

Or, let me express my thought in a somewhat different manner. In order to bring out the miraculous character of this astounding fact more vividly, we will somewhat change the illustration. Instead of consulting a venerable sage, suppose you go to some distinguished painter, and ask him to paint you a portrait. The first question he will put to you is: "Whose portrait do you want?" Now suppose you reply: "I wish you to

paint me in oils a picture of my great-grandson, but you must guarantee a perfect likeness". The painter will reply: "Well, send this grandson of yours to me and let him give me a sitting". Upon which you exclaim: "That I can't do, for he is not yet born!" The artist would throw up his hands in despair, and would conclude that he was dealing with a madman. He might say: "Dear sir, you have mistaken your way. This is my studio; Bedlam is in quite another quarter."

No one can draw a perfect and accurate likeness of a man who is not yet in existence. God, and God alone, sees the distant future. He, and He alone, can paint a true portrait of one who is to be, but who is not yet made. God sees and knows all. In fact all invisible things are to Him not invisible, but stand out clearly before Him. Hence, when we find the various writers drawing, in inspired words, the portrait of Christ, whom they never saw, and when we further note, so soon as Christ appears and manifests Himself, that the portrait, so drawn, is a true one, and an exact one, we know that God must have shown them the Original, and have described for them the Divine Person of Christ.

Let us go a step further, and suppose that,

instead of one individual, a dozen different painters are employed to produce the picture. First we behold nothing but the untouched canvas. Then an artist comes and takes his brush, and paints the feet; fifty years later, another painter adds the folds of the flowing robes; a third, a couple of centuries after, puts in the arms and hands; then, a generation or two later, another arises to fame, and paints the head, and the eyes and mouth and the other features. Observe, none of them have seen the man they are painting; indeed he has, as yet, no existence. Yet each painter is painting the same individual, each adds something to the original sketch, each fills in some portion of the entire figure, or adds a stroke here and a stroke there; and though each acts independently, and though each is separated from the rest by long distances both of time and of space, yet the final result is a most admirable and a most striking and unmistakable likeness of the man, and one which we can all recognise when, at last, he appears on earth in the flesh, and stands before us, for our contemplation.

Now the man we have been referring to is no other than Jesus Christ, the painters are the different writers of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The canvas is the Bible. They have painted not indeed with a brush, but with a pen; not with paints, but with words; but they have succeeded, all the same, in drawing a marvellous picture of the man Jesus, centuries before He appeared on earth: and as *they* could not possibly see Him, or watch His life and actions, before He "was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us," the conclusion is forced upon us that they must have been in communication with One who could and did see and know all from the very first; *i.e.*, they must have written what they did, under the direct inspiration of an Omniscient Being; and that Being can be no other than Almighty God.

Nor is it just a loose sketch they present us with; a mere outline that might, perhaps, with a little ingenuity, be fitted on and adjusted so as to suit any one. No! They set down all the most salient events in His career, and speak of His life, and the details of it, and the circumstances of it, just as though they had been actual eye-witnesses. And their descriptions are such as to apply to no one else. In plain truth, the picture of Jesus Christ drawn by the old Hebrew writers, centuries before His advent, is a miracle not only of divination,

but also of precision and of detail, and this fact of itself is enough to thoroughly convince us of the supernatural character of the whole book.

If the reader will carefully consult the Bible he may discover this for himself; time and space will allow me to cull only a few of the more salient passages by way of illustration. I will illustrate the accuracy of the ancient prophecies by giving just a general idea of what has been foretold.

It would take too much time to quote chapter and verse for each event prophesied. I will therefore confine myself to an examination of the beginning and the end of our Lord's life, and show how minutely every event was foretold and described. In Genesis we are told that Christ would be a descendant of Abraham (xii.) from the tribe of Juda (xlix.) through David (Is. xi.). Jeremias (xxxi.) says He will be born of a Virgin; Micheas (v.) adds a further particular, since he mentions the place, *viz.*, "in Bethlehem"; Daniel takes us a step further still; for he (ix.) mentions the date, *viz.*, in the seventieth week of years after the edict for the rebuilding of the Temple. Then certain special circumstances are given us. Thus: David, in the Psalms, tells us that

His coming will be preceded by a universal peace, and Malachias (iii.) that He will be announced by a special messenger; and Isaias (lx.) adds the further detail, that this messenger's voice will be heard "in the wilderness".

Bear in mind that all this is ages before Christ actually appeared. Isaias (lx.) informs us further that (*a*) He will be adored by kings, (*b*) that they will come from the East, (*c*) and that they will offer Him presents; he even informs us (*d*) of what these presents will consist, *viz.*, of gold and frankincense. Jeremias (xxi.), referring to the massacre of the innocents, says that Rachel (*i.e.*, Bethlehem) shall weep for her children. The prophet Osee (xi.) refers to Christ's flight into Egypt, and to His sojourn at Nazareth.

Though the Jews generally pictured to themselves the Messias as rich and great, yet the prophet David, evidently referring to His working as a youth in the shop of St. Joseph, the carpenter, foretells that "He will be poor and in labours from His youth" (Ps. lxxxvii.), "obedient" (xxxix.), "meek" and "peaceable" (cxix.). And so, in this gradual way, Christ's whole career is, little by little, traced and described; the picture growing more and more precise and the colours becoming

brighter and yet brighter as the time of fulfilment draws nearer.

Let us pass over the intervening years from Christ's childhood to the time of His public life, and listen to the ancient documents discoursing of His Passion. Zacharias (ix.) describes His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when Jerusalem will, he says, "shout for joy". He even goes into the most minute circumstances, and tells us that the Messias will be mounted on an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. David then refers to the black treachery of Judas, and speaking in the person of Christ, writes as follows, a thousand years before the event: "My enemies devised evils against Me, even he in whom I trusted" (Christ so trusted Judas as to make him His Apostle), "who eat My bread" (Judas dipped his hand in the dish, as he sat with Jesus, at the Last Supper), "hath greatly supplanted Me" (Ps. xl.). He further declares: "His days will be few" (they were exceedingly few, for he went and hanged himself); and "his dignity will pass to another"—this "other" refers to Matthias, who was chosen *in his place*; as we read in Acts, chapter the first.

So much concerning Judas. Then impersonating Christ again he says: "My heart is

troubled within me, and the *fear of death* is upon me". An allusion to Christ's agony, when he exclaimed in the garden of Gethsemani, "My soul is sorrowful even *unto death*" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Again he goes on: "I sought some one who might share my tribulation, or give me consolation, and I have found none". These words introduce us to the incident destined to take place fully ten hundred years later, when even Peter and James and John, the most faithful of all the Apostles, failed to offer Him consolation, and could not watch with Him for one short hour, even during His awful mental suffering in the garden on Mount Olivet; so that He reproached them saying: "What! Could you not watch one hour with Me!" The unjust witnesses that rose against Him, the multitude that "whetted their tongues like swords," are also mentioned, as well as their deicidal desire to condemn Him to a most "shameful death".

These ancient writers not only spoke of His sufferings and passion, but they foretold, likewise, exactly how Jesus would conduct Himself under His sufferings. "He shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer" is Isaias' (liii.) account. Others go on to describe how He will "give His body to the strikers"

(referring to His scourging) and how He "turned not away His face from them that rebuked Him, and spat upon Him". All which accords with the subsequent history of His Passion. They tell us further that He would be "hated without cause," that He would be "covered with wounds". "He hath become despised; an object of disdain, the most abject of men, a man of sorrows." What words could more accurately describe Him in His Passion, yet who, except one inspired, could have imagined or supposed that such would really have been His condition?

Not only all His sufferings and His attitude under them, but the very place of His wounds is foretold. "They have dug My *hands* and *feet*, they have numbered My bones." Even circumstances altogether special and peculiar, such as the soldiers stripping Him of His garments and their distributing them among themselves, are mentioned: "They parted My garments amongst them, and upon My vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi.).

Just consider! David must have written the words just quoted more than a thousand years before the event, since he died about B.C. 1015. And more than a thousand years before the Crucifixion we are distinctly told of the

vinegar and gall: "They gave Me gall for food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxxxviii.).

Further particulars are mentioned, such as that Christ shall be slain, yet that "no bone shall be broken" (Exod. xii.); that He shall be placed in the tomb and covered with a stone (Lam. vii.), but that He will rise again; the actual expression indicating His Resurrection runs as follows: "Thou, Lord, wilt not leave His soul in hell, nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xv.).

What is especially deserving of notice is that although the different incidents in our Lord's life have been described by different prophets, yet all fit together exactly to make up the complete picture. Each contributes something; each has some share in filling in the lights and shades. Yet so accurately does each particular statement harmonise with the whole, and so admirably does one writer supplement what is said by the others, that we cannot but feel persuaded that one and the same spirit was illuminating them all, and that each had before the eyes of his mind the self-same Christ and Redeemer.

I have given only a few specimens of these marvellous prophecies written by the various

prophets; but enough, I trust, to enable the reader to appreciate the extraordinary accuracy of their knowledge. Still the Jews were far too full of envy, hate and bitterness to see and recognise that these prophecies referred to Christ, and were fulfilled in Christ. But, wondrous to say, this very circumstance tends only to add further confirmation to the truth of the Bible, since this particular fact was also foreseen and foretold, as clearly as the rest. Isaiah, for example, must have known this more than seven hundred years before, for he asks: "What blindness shall be equal to that of the people of God?" (xlii.) *i.e.*, the Jews. Indeed he actually informs us of the fact, saying: "The prophecies shall be to them a sealed book" (xxix.). And again: "Wisdom shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (xxix. 14). It was so hidden, indeed, that they failed to see what even to us is as clear as the sun at noonday.

While passing these pages through the press, I was fortunate enough to come upon the following passage in W. Lyall's *Propædeia Prophetica* (p. 231), which is very much to the point. "There are few things more frequently and pointedly spoken of in the Old Testament

than the future blindness which was to fall on the Jews. In the very earliest of all the prophecies relating to the nation, where Moses is speaking of the intolerable miseries they would have to endure in the '*last days*,' it is mentioned, among other circumstances, '*that they shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness*'. Isaiah, speaking of the same period, tells the Jews, '*the spirit of deep sleep shall be poured upon their understandings*'. They were '*to have eyes, and see not; they were to have ears, and hear not*' — '*their hearts were to be made fat and their ears heavy, and their eyes to be shut, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted and healed*'. It is almost needless to accumulate authorities on this head, for they must be in the memory of every one who is conversant with Scripture. Allusions to it occur in almost every discourse of our Saviour; and the fact is exactly stated by St. Paul, where he tells the Corinthians, speaking of the veil which Moses put over his face (Exod. xxxiv.), that '*until this day*,' alluding to the Jews, '*remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their*

heart' (2 Cor. iii. 14, 15) (Acts xxviii.). If then we may believe St. Paul, the blindness of the Jews was judicial; at all events he considered it to be the immediate act of God."

When we read descriptions of events written a thousand years before they come to pass, and accurately and minutely delineated and portrayed, it is impossible to doubt but that God is the true Author of such descriptions. How could any mere man possibly discover, without Divine assistance and illumination, that Jesus would enter Jerusalem *seated on an ass;* or that he would be scourged; or that His face would be spat upon; or that His hands and feet would be dug through with nails?

How could any mere man, uninspired by God, venture to predict even the most minute circumstances, such as that the Roman soldiers, accustomed to break the legs of criminals, should make an exception in Christ's case, and break no bone in His body?[1] How would they dare to hazard such a statement as that the executioners would proceed to divide His other garments amongst them, but that coming to His vesture, which was a seamless one,

[1] See note at the end of the chapter.

they would not share that, but draw lots for it instead? And so forth.

Surely, in view of these facts, there is but one conclusion to which we can reasonably come, and that is, that the Bible is a Divine book, that its Author is God, and that the prophets and other writers were little more than His amanuenses. No wonder the Church venerates and honours so great a treasure; no wonder she guards it so jealously and strives so valiantly to save it from mutilation and misuse, and mistranslation and misinterpretation.

NOTE.

The following may be taken as a specimen of the correspondence that arose out of this chapter, when it first appeared.

An objector writes:—

"Monsignor Vaughan states that Christ shall be slain, yet that 'no bone shall be broken' (Exod. xii.). This he calls a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, and towards the conclusion of the chapter, he says: 'How could any mere man, uninspired by God, venture to predict the most minute circumstances, such as that the Roman soldiers, accustomed to break the legs of criminals, should make an exception in Christ's case, and break no bone of his body?'

"No man, either inspired or uninspired, ever predicted anything of the kind concerning Jesus Christ? The

passage referred to is in Exodus. The Book of Exodus, in instituting the Jewish Passover, in which they were to eat a he-lamb or a he-goat, says (xii. 5): 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats'. Then, after stating some ceremonies to be used in killing and dressing it (for it was to be roasted, not boiled), says, verse 43: 'And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron: This is the ordinance of the Passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof; a foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house, *neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*'

"We here see that the case as it stands in Exodus is *a ceremony and not a prophecy, and totally unconnected* with Jesus' bones, or any part of him. Yet we are calmly told in John xix. 36: 'For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken'. Then when we turn to Exodus to look for the so-called prophecy, we find that it is the bones of a he-lamb or a he-goat of which the passage speaks.

"Yours, etc.,

"J. HALL, Aberdeen."

ANSWER.

Mr. Hall's letter furnishes us with a capital illustration (*a*) of the difficulty that even intelligent men find in their attempts to interpret the Bible, and (*b*) of the need of some authoritative voice to safeguard the casual reader from his own delusive conclusions. We have to choose between the claims of St. John the Evangelist and of Mr. Hall. Referring to the fact that our Lord's bones

were not broken, Mr. Hall writes: "No man, either inspired or uninspired, ever predicted anything of the kind concerning Christ". Unfortunately, Mr. Hall's interpretation of the passage in Exodus contradicts the interpretation of the Apostle, who distinctly informs us that "these things were done *that the Scripture should be fulfilled, viz.*, a bone of His Body shall not be broken" (xix. 36). The question then before us resolves itself into this: Whom shall we follow? Who is more likely to know? Whose verdict and interpretation come to us weighted with the greater authority? The Evangelist's or Mr. Hall's? St. John has, at any rate, the following claims to recommend him:—

1. He was an Apostle, an eye-witness of the Passion, and one taught of God Incarnate.

2. He was a Hebrew, fully acquainted with the language.

3. He understood and was familiar with the character, the forms of expression and the customs of the Jews.

4. He knew the force and meaning, and what I may call *the prophetic value* of the types and figures and symbols and ceremonies so common among the chosen people.

5. He lived nearly 2,000 years nearer to the period in which Exodus was written than Mr. Hall, and was well aware of the sense in which the words were commonly accepted by the Hebrew exegetes in his own day.

6. St. John was inspired, and wrote under the impulse of the Holy Ghost.

These are some of the grounds upon which we trust the interpretation of the Apostle.

As Catholics, we *know* that St. John was illuminated by God, and that his teaching is the teaching of the Holy Spirit; but even though (for the sake of argument) we suppose ourselves to be all rationalists, I take it that, even

then, most of us would consider the authority of St. John more reliable than that of Mr. Hall; for the first five reasons that have already been alleged. The sixth will apply, of course, only in the case of Christians.

Mr. Hall "informs" us that "the case, as it stands in Exodus, is a ceremony, and *not* a prophecy". St. John, on the contrary, clearly insinuates that the case "is a ceremony *and* a prophecy"; for, unless it be a prophecy, how could it "be fulfilled"?

The fact is that the Paschal Lamb was intended to be, and was recognised by all as a figure of Christ. This was so well known that, as soon as our Lord began His public life, the Baptist, wishing to proclaim His presence to the world, exclaimed, not "Behold the Messiah" or "Behold the Christ," but what he knew would be understood much better, *viz.*, "Behold the *Lamb* of God" (John i. 29, 36). Hence, too, St. Paul writes: "Christ, *our Pasch*, is crucified" (1 Cor. v. 7).

Christ was a lamb, by reason of His innocence; He was a lamb by reason of His gentleness. The Paschal Lamb typified Him, since He was slain that we might live; and the law, forbidding the Jews to break any bone of the *sacrificed lamb*, foreshadowed the *Divine Lamb* slain likewise, yet without a bone in His body being broken. It was indeed a prophecy, and one which St. John saw fulfilled before his very eyes.

We Britons are not used to express ourselves in figures and parables and mystical signs, and poetical emblems and figured language, as were the Jews of old, and we cannot always catch their full force. Least of all should we go north of the Tweed to find a ready and correct interpreter of Hebrew symbolism.

CHAPTER III.

PRIVATE JUDGMENT AND FREE INQUIRY.

> Religion spawn'd a various rout
> Of petulant, capricious sects,
> The maggots of *corrupted* texts.
>
> —*Butler.*

> In religion,
> What damned error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it and approve it with a text.
>
> —*Shakespeare.*

EVERY genuine Christian—yea, every one who acknowledges Christ as, in any sense, his Master and Teacher, whether he be a Plymouth Brother, a Salvationist, or a member of any other sect, glories and exults in the possession of his Bible. The park preacher and the local tub-thumper, whose eloquent accents resound through the squares and other open spaces of the city, making night hideous, are as proud of their well-thumbed Testaments as the most highly cultured and learned prelate of the Anglican Establishment. All appeal to the Bible. All quote from it. All have recourse to it for their arms, both offensive

and defensive. Its inspired pages are continually scoured and ransacked for arguments and proofs and illustrations that favour, or that seem to favour, their respective tenets. For this reason it is very important that we should strive, from the outset, to realise what it is exactly that makes the Bible such a valuable book. We all appreciate the priceless volume. We all reverence it. We all, and more especially we Catholics, set the highest possible price upon the possession of it. To us it is a perfect "*aurifodina*," or treasury of spiritual wealth. True. But what is it precisely, let me ask, that we so esteem? Is it the mere possession of the material book? Is it the leaves and the binding and so many pounds' weight of paper? Is it the printed forms of the letters and the punctuation? No. Nothing of the kind.

The Bible is valuable to us, not for the sake of anything we can see or touch; not for the sake of anything in it that appeals to the senses. No! It is valuable only in so far as it is a medium of communication between our mind and the mind of God. We estimate it so highly solely because we believe God speaks to us through it; solely because He reveals certain doctrines, or expresses His Divine will

by means of the words and sentences it contains. About the actual shape of the letters, or about the precise sound of the words we do not care one straw; all we care about is the truth that God expresses or reveals by means of them. Even if we had the exact words and the identical expressions used by our Lord, which, of course, nowhere exist, they would be utterly useless if we had not, at the same time, the truth they enclose, and their genuine meaning. Why? Because then we should have the shell, but not the kernel; the rind, but not the fruit. If we have before us God's own statement, but draw out of that statement a meaning that God never put into it—well! we may hold the Bible in one hand and gesticulate and knock the dust out of the pulpit cushion with the other, and proclaim ourselves, in a voice of thunder, to be "Bible Christians," but we have not God's word, we have not God's truth; we have not His doctrine either in our heart or in our mind or on our tongue, and we are not really "Bible Christians" at all. Yet few itinerant preachers seem to understand this, they think to instil truth by mere force of lung and of tongue.

It is one thing to have in our keeping a precious document; it is quite another thing

to have in our mind the message it is intended to convey. When King Baltassar and his guests, in the midst of their profane banquet, saw a hand suddenly appear, and the joints of the fingers moving, and writing on the surface of the wall of the King's palace (Dan. v. 5) they were troubled exceedingly and their countenances fell; and great fear came upon them all. But the contemplation of the mere material letters or hieroglyphics was of no use. They conveyed no meaning until they had been interpreted; and, what is more, *correctly* interpreted. The King knew this, so he sent for his wise men, the Chaldeans, and soothsayers, and bade them explain the words written by the finger of God. But they could not. They might guess or surmise, but none of them ventured to declare for certain what was the warning they contained. Now, read the passage in the prophet Daniel for yourselves, and you will observe that the position of these men very closely resembles that of the multitude of present-day unauthorised interpreters of the words written by the finger of God, not indeed on the wall, but in the Bible. They too *guess* at the meaning, yet are never sure. But to return to our illustration. At last Baltassar bethought himself of Daniel, a prophet of the

true God, and Daniel immediately read the words, and told the King what they really signified.

As those Divine words, written on the wall of the King's palace, needed an interpreter, so do the Divine words contained in the Holy Scriptures need an interpreter. The representative of God in the kingdom of Babylon then was Daniel; the representative of God in the kingdom of this world now is the Church. She and she alone can decide the meaning of God's words. She is *now* what Daniel was *then, viz.*, the final court of appeal. In vain shall I hold the inspired pages in my hands, and in vain shall I read the actual words, unless I can pierce through the external form, and get at their true contents. If I do not arrive at their real sense they are a snare and a stumbling-block, not an aid. And alas! alas! Woe to me if I read into them a false sense—a sense not only different from, but even contrary to that intended by the Divine Author—and then proceed to use the Divine authority of that Book to justify that false sense. For then I am not merely misusing the sacred text, but I am representing God as approving and as teaching my own errors and falsehoods. No. The Bible under such con-

ditions becomes a positive danger, an obstacle, and a source of grave spiritual peril, and in many cases a cause of eternal damnation. One may say of the Bible what has been said of Christ Himself, *viz.*, it "is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many, and for a sign that shall be contradicted" (Luke ii. 34). The Scriptures are valuable, yes most valuable, but, let me repeat, only in so far as they are channels of truth.

So soon as a man, through ignorance, or pride, or malice, or want of consideration, attaches a false meaning to any passage, he transforms the words of truth into a prolific source of sin, and, may-be, even of eternal spiritual ruin. He poisons the very wells of Divine revelation. If God says "black," and I so interpret His words as to make Him appear to say "white"; if He says "yes," and I make Him say "no," I am not merely insisting on what is in itself false, which is bad enough, but I am doing what is immeasurably worse: I am putting falsehoods into the mouth of God Himself, and I am representing the Infinite Truth as supporting my own mischievous and damnable heresies. Hence, it is easily understood that, in dealing with the Scripture, there is nothing so important, or so absolutely

essential, as to arrive at its true and genuine signification. Unless that be got at, it is better to be without the Scripture altogether. Better not to have the Book at all than to turn it into an occasion of eternal damnation. The question, then, we now have to ask ourselves is : Are the Sacred Scriptures easy or difficult to understand throughout ? Were we to listen (I will not say to *all*, but) to the *generality* of Protestants, we might be led to imagine that nothing were easier or more simple. They advocate what they call "the open Bible," *i.e.*, "the Bible without note or comment," as though no kind of assistance were needed, even in the obscurer passages.

They contend that every man, even the foolish and perverse (for they make no distinctions), should read the Bible for himself and expound it for himself. Thus the Rev. Ed. Bickersteth tells us, in his introduction to *A Scripture Help*, that "from his heart he embraces the great Protestant principle, that the Bible, in all things necessary to salvation, is *clear as the noonday*, and that it is *every* man's duty and privilege to read the Bible, the whole Bible, for himself . . . it contains in itself the key which will open its treasures" (p. 4). Now, if such a system means anything,

it means that the inspired pages are so plain, so simple, so straightforward and their contents so lucidly expressed in all their parts that every man may grasp their meaning without any serious risk of going astray. Is this indeed the case? Most decidedly not. Such a view is indefensible, mischievous and false. It is contrary (1) to common sense. It is contrary (2) to the explicit teaching of Scripture itself, and it is (3) absolutely disproved by history and experience. We will deal with these three statements in order.

First, then, it is contrary to common sense. The very history and form of the Bible prove this. There are, in the first place, the peculiarities and special idioms and Hebrewisms of the original language, which are difficult enough to deal with in themselves, but which are made much more difficult when approached in their English dress. There are, in the second place, difficulties arising from discrepancies, apparent contradictions, and inconsistencies, and from certain practices which would easily mislead the casual reader, such as that of sometimes giving different names to the same individual, or to the same place; for instance, the father-in-law of Moses is called in one place Jethro (Exod. iii.) and in another place

Hobab (Judges iv. 11), while the Lake of Gennesareth is called the "Sea of Galilee," the "Dead Sea," the "Salt Sea," the "Sea of the Plain," and the "Sea of Tiberias". Then the expressions, the forms of speech, and the references and allusions to be met with in the Bible belong to ages, countries and nationalities totally different to our own; further, most of the manners and customs therein described have passed away; allusions are made to habits and practices familiar enough to the actual contemporaries of the writers, and which then, indeed, threw light upon the text and illuminated it, but which now no longer exist. Other difficulties arise from the very sublimity and grandeur of the theme, and from the mysteriousness of many of the doctrines, especially such as are taught in the New Testament, which the carnal-minded and the earthly and worldly-minded can scarcely bring themselves to accept according to the obvious sense of the words, but strive rather to explain away: such, for example, as the promise Christ made to give us "His Flesh to eat," which seems to their feeble faith too wonderful to be accepted *literally*, or else, like the doctrine of eternal torment, not perhaps too wonderful, but rather to their minds too

awful and cruel! Private persons will not always take upon themselves the responsibility of interpreting literally words expressive of such doctrines, and need an infallible guide to make assurance doubly sure. St. Vincent of Lerins (A.D. 450) observes, very pertinently: "Some, perhaps, may ask what need is there to join to Holy Scripture the authority of ecclesiastical interpretation". He answers: "The reason is this—that the Scripture being of itself so deep and profound, all men do not understand it in one and the same sense, but divers men diversely; this man and that man, this way and that way, expound and interpret the sayings thereof, so that, to one's thinking, so many men, so many opinions also may be gathered out of it . . . and therefore *it is most necessary, because of the vagaries of errors so various,* that the line of expounding the prophets and apostles be drawn according to the rule of the ecclesiastical and Catholic sense" (*Commonitorium*, ch. ii.). If this great saint so expressed himself in the *fifth* century, what would he have said were he writing in the *twentieth*, when sects have so multiplied?

For these and for many other reasons, some of which have been touched upon in the First Chapter, the Bible cannot be said to be a book

of easy interpretation, such as every enterprising cobbler, blacksmith or common labourer can consult satisfactorily and expound with results advantageous either to himself or to anybody else.

Secondly, to say that the correct interpretation of the Bible is easy and within the competence of all men, even of the unlearned and the unwise, is to contradict the explicit teaching of the Holy Book itself. St. Peter lays down two very important principles in this connection, in the second of his inspired epistles. The first principle is this, that, "No prophecy of Scripture is made by *private* interpretation," that is to say, the various passages are to be understood, not according to each individual's judgment or imagination or caprice, but according to the mind of the Church. The Prince of the Apostles not merely states the principle, but he likewise adds the reason in the following profound words: "For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time; but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). From this we gather that no one is fully capable and competent to interpret the word of God except he have the Spirit of God. And here St. Peter merely affirms implicitly

what St. Paul affirms explicitly, *viz.*: "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 14). How, then, can he perceive the true meaning of the Scriptures, which most certainly are "of the Spirit of God," more especially in view of what the same Apostle assures us when he says that the inspired writers "speak the wisdom of God *in mystery*, a wisdom which is *hidden*" (1 Cor. ii. 7), and therefore not readily accessible to all? In regard to the second principle, St. Peter puts the case still more forcibly and explicitly. When referring to the Epistles of St. Paul he writes that in them "are certain things hard to be understood, and which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do *also the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction. You, therefore, knowing these things beforehand, take heed, lest you be led aside by the error of the unwise," etc. (2 Pet. iii. 17). In the above words three facts of deep significance are revealed to us by the Holy Ghost. The first is that the writings of St. Paul contain statements hard to be understood. The second is that the other parts of the Bible likewise contain difficult and obscure passages; and the third revealed fact is that the unlearned and the unstable not merely

fail to discover the true import of the passages they read, but that they attach false meanings to them, and force them from their true sense, with the most disastrous consequence to themselves. They "wrest," that is to say, they twist and turn and torture and force meanings out of texts which these texts by no means contain. They have the audacity, for instance, to affirm that "This *is* My Body" means "This is *not* My Body," but only a figure or a memorial of it. Or, again, when reading the words: "Whose sins *you* shall forgive, they *are forgiven*," they declare the meaning really to be: "Whose sins YOU shall forgive, they *are not forgiven, by you,* at all; but if you preach the Gospel, those who hear you and believe in the Lord will gain forgiveness—merely by their faith in Christ," and so forth. Did such private interpretation carry with it mere error, folly and falsehood, and nothing further, we might contemplate the vast multitude of ignorant but self-satisfied and self-appointed expositors of the Bible with a greater sense of composure; but St. Peter categorically declares that it leads to sin and to eternal damnation. "Destruction" is the word actually used. Let me then ask the gentle reader, as a reasonable being, is it or is

it not a fact that "the unlearned wrest the Scripture to their own destruction"? And if it be a fact—as St. Peter affirms — is or is not the Catholic Church abundantly justified when (wishing to save men from such a peril) she positively forbids them to fix upon the text their own gloss, in contradiction to her express teaching? Surely the Church of God has the right to try and protect her children from attempting their own spiritual destruction!

If we turn to the Acts of the Apostles we shall find that even men of position and culture needed help and direction when studying the sacred text. Thus, the eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia, when reading the words of the prophet Isaias, on his journey home, admitted his inability to grasp the sense of what he read, unless some one would be kind enough to undertake to explain it to him. After reading out certain passages he turned to Philip and said: "I beseech thee, of whom doth the prophet speak, is it of himself or of some other man?" (Acts viii.) The eunuch was himself unable to decide. He was left in suspense. In the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel we meet with a still more remarkable example of the difficulty

of correctly applying the inspired text, and of recognising the great truths to which it points. The two Apostles who met Jesus on their way to Emmaus were quite unable to trace step by step the fulfilment of the Scripture in the events that had so recently occurred. So that our Lord was obliged to interpret the passages for them. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). Then they plucked up courage, and their hearts burnt within them, as "He opened to them the Scriptures" (xxiv. 32). Before this they were evidently like a sealed book.

"The difficulty of correctly interpreting the Bible," writes Bishop Milner, "is proved by the frequent mistakes of the Apostles in respect to the words of their Divine Master. These obscurities are so numberless throughout the sacred volume that St. Augustine, who was as acute, profound and learned a divine as ever took the Bible in hand, says of it: 'There are more things in Scripture of which I am ignorant, than with which I am

[1] *Vide The End of Religious Controversy*, edited by L. Rivington, p. 92.

acquainted'."[1] Would to God that those Bible Christians, who have none of St. Augustine's great learning, had at least some tinge of his modesty and humility!

But that which both common sense and the explicit words of the Bible declare has been made abundantly manifest by a sad and deplorable experience, extending over many centuries. No one can follow the quarrels and wrangles that have arisen, outside the pale of the Catholic Church, as to the precise meaning and force of certain words and sentences; no one can reflect upon the emphatic manner in which opposite schools have claimed opposite meanings for the same expressions, without realising the pressing need of an authoritative interpreter. When we seek for the origin of the innumerable heresies that have sprung up from the earliest ages of the Church, and more especially since the time in which the invention of printing placed Bibles in everybody's hands, we shall find they are almost all due to the stubborn determination on the part of proud and headstrong discontents to put their own personal interpretation upon the oracles of God. Even so far back as the time of St. Augustine men had already begun to "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction" and,

it may surely be added, to the destruction of thousands of their followers as well. Commenting on St. John (Tract 18) St. Augustine writes: "Non aliunde natæ sunt Hæreses, nisi dum Scripturæ bonæ intelliguntur non bene"; *i.e.*, "Heresies have no other origin than the Bible misinterpreted and misunderstood". Look out on the world around, or, if you prefer it, confine your examination even to England alone, and count the number of different sects and religious denominations that have sprung up, and then you will see some of the results of allowing unauthorised persons to exercise and to follow their own private judgment in the matter of Scriptural exegesis. Once such a principle is introduced, one will find, as an inevitable consequence, that the inspired word of God is dragged in, to prove every doctrine or religious view that can be thought of or invented, however far-fetched, extravagant, absurd and untrue.

Protestants, especially of the more rabid type, are very angry that we should even suggest the possibility of the Bible leading any one astray. They talk as though we were attacking the veracity of God Himself. Thus, Mr. W. Walsh, of the Protestant Alliance, after denouncing such teaching

with his usual extravagant and heated rhetoric, concludes with the observation: "One would suppose that the Bible were a kind of mad dog, which can only be let abroad freely when it is wearing a Papal muzzle".[1] However, when we are called upon to choose between St. Peter, who warns us most seriously that there *are* dangers and great dangers, and Mr. Walsh, who implies that there *are none*, our task is not a very difficult one. We know whom to trust.

Consider further such texts as: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18); or, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19); or, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (John iii. 5); or, "If any man be sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil," etc. (James v. 14); or, "The meat that I shall give you is My Flesh" (John vi. 52). Consider, I repeat, any one of these and similar texts, and then call to mind the sea of controversy to which they have given rise, and the storms of con-

[1] *How Rome Treats the Bible*, p. 11.

flicting views and opinions which have raged and still rage around them. If the meaning of Scripture be really so excessively clear, so self-evident, so luminous, and so obvious to the meanest capacity, and so thoroughly within reach of even the unlettered and the uninstructed, how in the name of common sense does it arise that there is no unity, no harmony of belief, no uniformity of doctrine—nothing, in a word, but confusion? How comes it that men divide and quarrel? How are we to explain that of a dozen men who exercise their private judgment on the Divine oracle of infallible truth no two are agreed; but that they all flatly and strenuously oppose one another? Facts are stubborn things. And no more certain, no more palpable fact was ever written on the face of history than that the Scriptures, when left to be interpreted by different individuals according to their own personal judgment and shallow reasoning, lead not to unity, but to disunity; not to order and harmony of religious faith, but to disorder, chaos and spiritual ruin. The warning of St. Peter, except within the true Church of God, has fallen on deaf ears. The difficulties in Holy Writ, to which he so

solemnly called attention, well-nigh two thousand years ago, have been practically denied. Every man has been assured that he may safely expound the inspired text for himself. Not even a guiding voice or a word of warning, not even a notice-board or a finger-post, in the form of a footnote, at the obscurer and more doubtful passages, is to be tolerated! The Catholic Church alone is sensible of her duty. Only she ventures to control and to safeguard the casual reader. The Protestant principle is "the open Bible". Her gift to her children is "the Bible, without note or comment". She acts as a mother who should put the sharp-edged sword, so useful in the hands of the experienced warrior, into the untutored hands of an infant, with which to wound itself. The glittering blade of God's word, "sharp and piercing as a two-edged sword," she hands over to the keeping of the child, before he has either strength or knowledge enough to wield it. As a consequence, instead of using it against his enemies, or in his own defence, he but too often turns the weapon against himself, and injures himself beyond recovery. The lesson that history and experience have repeated with such fearful eloquence, and at such a terrible cost to

souls, was taught by St. Peter; yes, *taught* indeed clearly enough, but *not learnt;* not taken to heart; not seriously and honestly applied, except indeed by those who have always hearkened to him, and by such as still listen and obey him, speaking to-day to the world by the lips of his successor Pius X.

The true children of the Catholic Church alone have learnt to distrust their own fallible judgment and to wait for and rest upon the verdict of that divinely constituted Judge who, St. Paul tells us, is "the pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Hence, they indeed have held together, and still, in spite of their gigantic number, form one solid, compact and united whole—a single flock, under a single shepherd; but other religions have become hopelessly and endlessly divided. The historian, Lord Macaulay, though a true Protestant, could see even in his day the confusion to which "private judgment" and "free inquiry" inevitably lead. And of this he speaks with extraordinary bluntness and logic: "Our way of ascertaining the tendency of free inquiry," he writes, "is simply to open our eyes and look at the world in which we live; and there we see that free inquiry on mathematical

subjects produces unity, and that free inquiry on moral subjects produces discrepancy. That we have not freedom and unity together is a very sad thing; and so it is that we have not wings. But we are just as likely to see the one defect removed as the other." He then goes on to observe that "there are two intelligible and consistent courses which may be followed with respect to the exercise of private judgment; that of Rome, which forbids it, because of its inevitable inconveniences; and the course of the Protestant, who permits it in spite of its inevitable inconveniences". He then, with the frankness of an historian, observes that "the religion of the Church of England is so far from exhibiting unity of doctrine, that it is in fact a bundle of religious systems without number. It comprises the religious system of Bishop Tomline and the religious system of John Newton, and all the religious systems that lie between them. It comprises the religious system of Mr. Newman and the religious system of the Archbishop of Dublin, and all the religious systems which lie between them. All these different opinions are held, avowed, preached and printed within the pale of the Church (of England) by men of unquestioned

integrity and understanding."[1] Macaulay wrote thus in 1839. Since then the contrasts and discrepancies have enormously increased. The *late* Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Ryle, recognised the utter want of unity so well that he did not hesitate to write: "One thing is very certain, if we cannot lessen our unhappy divisions, there is only one conclusion before us. That conclusion is the disruption and complete break up of the Established Church of England."[2]

Let us pass to another consideration. The Bible contains the teaching of Christ, the laws by which we are to govern our conduct, the counsels of perfection, and so forth. It may, in fact, be considered as our guide and the law-book of our spiritual life. Now, this being the case, we may well ask—if a special human authority be needed to interpret the laws of man, which no one will deny, surely a special divinely constituted authority is needed, and, let me say, very much more needed, to interpret the laws of God? In every civilised state, in every kingdom, empire and republic throughout the world we invariably find two things. We find, in the

[1] *Gladstone on Church and State*, pp. 511 and 517.

[2] *Visitation Charge*, Nov., 1893.

first place, a code of laws and traditions, and prescriptions and obligations imposed by the State, and, in the second place, we find a lawfully constituted tribunal, whose particular duty it is to administer these laws, to explain their meaning, to see that they are properly applied, and to enforce their enactments. Who ever lived in a country where each citizen was presented with a book of its laws, and was then left to understand them after his own fashion? Who ever heard of any great nation, or indeed of any tribe or society whatsoever, with the slightest pretension to civilisation, publishing a digest of its laws, and then laying down the principle that every man should interpret them for himself? In secular affairs men are sometimes considerably shrewder than in spiritual affairs. "The children of this world," says the Holy Spirit, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." They are perfectly well aware that if there be a political constitution, there must be an authority to see that it is faithfully adhered to; and that if there be a code of laws, there must be a body of learned judges, and barristers and lawyers to administer the law, and to decide all important cases that are brought before them. The

courts are constantly sitting. Barristers are continually disputing and arguing, and the judges are, week by week and day by day, giving their decisions, and passing sentence. Though each litigant in a case may believe himself to be in the right, and though each would gladly follow his own private judgment, he is simply not allowed—no, not in matters of this world. It is only in the supernatural order, and in a false creed founded by man, that such an utterly ridiculous and unworkable system is tolerated, or could survive a week. In the natural and civil order private judgment is forced to yield to the public and official judgment of the properly constituted authority. The individual cannot expound the law of the land for himself. He is compelled, whether he like it or no, to make his view conform to the view of the presiding judge. He has to accept his ruling, however strongly and passionately he may object to it.

The Supreme Court of Law in England actually decides all such questions authoritatively and finally. Neither honours, titles, wealth, learning nor fame can influence its decisions ; no posse of armed men stand by to protect the officials in the discharge of their duty : yet this court is continually settling

questions involving the most intensely vital and personal interests of thousands of men, and interpreting the laws for the whole community. To what condition would the State be reduced if every man were permitted to form his own opinion as to the force and value of every legal phrase in the law book, and if no tribunal existed to settle disputes as they arose? There would be no order, no peace—nothing but confusion. The condition of the State would soon become as confused and as chaotic as the condition of the Anglican Church at the present day. And can anything worse be conceived?

If an authoritative interpreter be needed in the case of the civil law, which by comparison is simple and intelligible enough, surely such an authority is immeasurably more requisite in the case of the Divine law, with its high code of morals, its sublime doctrines, its deep mysteries, its incomprehensible dogmas, and its essentially supernatural and superhuman character. This, then, is what we claim for the Catholic Church: *viz.*, a right to decide finally and for ever all questions involving the correct meaning and the exact force and value of the text of that Book which her Divine Founder has committed to her keeping. She

does for the law of God what the Judge does for the law of man, with this difference, however, that her decision is not only final but infallible. Christ promised that the Holy Spirit should remain with the Church for ever. But it is this same Holy Spirit who, in the first instance, inspired the Sacred Scriptures; therefore when the Church interprets a disputed passage, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is in reality explaining His own meaning; and in appealing to the Church we are appealing to the very Author of the Book; or, if not absolutely to this Divine Author, then at all events to one who most certainly and literally has the spirit and the mind of the Author. And observe, we have God's own assurance that "The things that are of God, *no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor. ii. 14). How then can *every* man be his own instructor and his own guide through all the intricacies and labyrinths of Holy Scripture?

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRITTEN AND THE UNWRITTEN WORD.

Calm and fair consideration will clearly show that the Church has never failed in taking due measures to bring the Scriptures within reach of her children, and that she has ever held fast and exercised profitably that guardianship conferred upon her by Almighty God for the protection and glory of His holy word: so that she has never required, nor does she now require, any stimulation from without.—POPE LEO XIII., *Providentissimus.*

WHAT has been the Catholic Church's attitude towards the Bible? What has ever been her practice in the matter of forbidding or allowing her children free access to its inspired pages? Protestants, especially Nonconformists and the members of the more modern sects, declare, with considerable warmth and bitterness, that the Catholic Church positively fears the Bible; that she belittles the word of God, and carefully keeps it out of reach of her children. They never weary of quoting her condemnations, and her solemn decrees against its indiscriminate use; indeed they

persistently represent her as ready to fulminate her excommunications against any one who should dare to open the sacred volume, or peer too curiously into that Divine book. What truth is there in such allegations? What is the simple unvarnished fact? The plain fact is that the line taken up by the Church is the most logical, the most consistent, the most sound and prudent that could be followed. To explain her action in the matter of the Holy Bible, and to realise the full force of her wisdom in issuing her decrees and her warnings and her prohibitions, one must first carefully search out and then seriously consider and weigh her reasons.

For it is a well-recognised legal principle that to gauge the meaning and purpose of a law one must, above all things, seek to find out the mind of the lawgiver. Now the Church is set up and sustained in this world by a Divine power for the express purpose of teaching. Her commission is founded upon the solemn commands: "Go and teach"; "Teach all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19). "These things command and teach" (1 Tim. iv. 11); and so forth. And what was she to teach? The truth. She was to impart to all the great and life-giving truths of the Gospel.

Hence, to put the whole matter into a nutshell, her one and paramount object and desire is to put her children in possession of Divine truth.

As a consequence of this, in dealing with the Bible, the first question the Church puts to herself is: Does the Bible contain the truth? Is it the word of God; is it written, that is to say, under Divine guidance and inspiration? Her answer, of course, is a most unqualified, a most unhesitating, and a most emphatic *Yes!* Observe, I am speaking now of the genuine and original Hebrew and Greek Testaments. These are safe; even the Hebrew and Greek *copies* are substantially correct, so she puts no difficulty, and never has put any difficulty in the way of any true and sincere Catholic reading and studying these copies, and meditating and pondering over them, to his heart's content. There never was any decree issued by Rome against reading the Scriptures in the languages in which they were composed.

Let us now advance a step, and ask: Does the Church allow her subjects the free use of translations? Well, that, of course, is quite another question. Consequently the answer is somewhat different, although equally reason-

able and consistent. The Church says to her children: "I am here to see that you get the truth. It is my bounden duty to watch over and to safeguard you from error. It is my business to see that you receive the unadulterated doctrine of Christ. I will not, nay I dare not offer you in its place the doctrine of men. No. I will never feed my children on error, nor yet on an admixture of truth and error. You may read the word of God and meditate on it, if you will, day and night, but you must make quite sure that it *is* the word of God. Indeed, the more you read the Bible the better, provided you draw out of it the sound sense and the true meaning that God puts into it. If you ask me, therefore, if I will allow my children to read translations I reply: Well, that depends. Whether I say 'yes,' or whether I say 'no,' must be determined entirely by the nature of the translation. Before giving leave, I am in conscience bound to ask: Is the translation, of which you wish to make use, accurate, is it exact, is it a fair and just rendering of the original? Or is it, as is too often the case, inaccurate, inexact, unfair and in many passages misleading and out of harmony with the original? If the translation has been the work of heretics and designing

men it lies open to grave suspicion, and if words have been omitted or inserted in order to favour their false doctrines, and if passages have been mutilated, or so expressed as to suggest a meaning differing from that which was inspired, then I cannot allow it to be read. But am I, on that account, to be accused of *keeping the word of God from my children?* Is it fair, is it right to declare from the housetops, as many do, that I forbid the reading of the Bible? No; such an accusation is false! *I do not forbid the reading of the Bible.* What I forbid is the reading of a bad, an imperfect, a misleading and pernicious translation; that is all."

When Protestants point to various ecclesiastical enactments prohibiting the general use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue it will always be found, on examination, that these regulations relate, not to the Scriptures in themselves, but to translations which, for one reason or another, are defective and dangerous, and liable to lead to error, rather than to a fuller knowledge of the truth. As a simple historical fact such laws and restrictions had no existence till the need of them became most painfully apparent, through the misuse that disloyal and evil-minded men

made of the Holy Book. When men began to turn the Scriptures into an engine of destruction it was time to act as well as to speak. The Church is no "dumb dog" who can stand by while the flock is being torn to pieces by wolves in sheep's clothing. These restrictions and regulations were first drawn up and promulgated in the time of the heresy of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, in the thirteenth century. Since that time such regulations have become yet more loudly called for, more necessary and more important, for every Protestant sect has sought in turn to prove its particular form of heresy from the Bible.

The early English Protestant translations, known as those of Tyndale, of Coverdale, and of Queen Elizabeth's Bishops, were so notoriously corrupt as to cause a general outcry against them, even among learned Protestants, as well as amongst Catholics. "It is affirmed (says Disraeli) that one Bible swarmed with 6,000 faults. Indeed from another source we discover that Sterne, a solid scholar, was the first who summed up the 3,600 faults that were in our printed Bibles of London." "In Bibles by Field and Hills we may find abundant errata, reducing the text to nonsense or to blasphemy; making the Scriptures con-

temptible to the multitude, who came to pray and not to scoff."[1] The use to which the sacred volume was turned by those who now got possession of it was enough to excite the indignation of even Henry VIII. himself. In his last speech to Parliament he is reported to have said: "The Bible itself is turned into wretched rhymes, sung and jangled in every ale-house and tavern. Yet, I am sure that charity was never so faint among ye, virtue never at so low an ebb, and God Himself never less honoured or worse served in Christendom."[2]

In this connection it may be interesting to observe that among non-Catholics much is made of the fact that the Bible was not more commonly translated into the vulgar tongue before the period of the "Reformation". Protestants think they detect some deep-laid scheme or artful design in this. "The Pope," they allege, "is afraid of the awful consequences to the Church of Rome," etc. But the explanation is perfectly simple.

There was really no need for such translations. At that date they would have served no particular purpose. For observe, the whole

[1] Disraeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, pp. 430, 431.

[2] Collier's *Ecc. Hist.*, Part II., Book III., p. 218.

population might have been practically divided into two classes: first, those who could read, and second, those who could not read. Now, let me ask: For which class do our Protestant friends claim that the vernacular translations were so greatly needed? Certainly not for the second class, *i.e.*, not for those who were unable to read; since such persons could have made no possible use of translations, even if they had had them. Then were they required for such as could read? No. Not for those either. Why? Because in those days reading was a sign of a certain degree of scholarship and erudition, and it would have been hard to have found any man capable of reading, who was not also capable of understanding, at least, Latin. Latin was a common language among the educated, and understood by all with any claim to scholarship. The historian, Gasquet, O.S.B., remarks: "The groundwork of all school learning was the knowledge of the Latin language, and the *first* tasks set to beginners were easy lessons in grammar, the learning of words and their declensions and the practice of turning sentences of English into Latin for the purpose of Latin conversations". The records of the proceedings in the

courts of law were in Latin almost up to the time of the "Reformation," and the wills of dying persons were commonly in the same tongue. "Both Old and New Testaments," says Rev. Charles Buck, a rank Protestant, "were translated into Latin by the *primitive* Christians; and while the Roman Empire subsisted in Europe, the reading of the Scriptures in the Latin tongue, which was the universal language of that Empire, prevailed *everywhere*."[1] "No book," says a modern author, "was more frequently republished than the Latin Vulgate, of which ninety-eight distinct and full editions appeared prior to 1500, besides twelve others which contained the *Glossa Ordinaria* or the Postils of Lyranus. From 1475, when the first Venetian issue is dated, twenty-two complete impressions have been found in the city of St. Mark alone. Half a dozen folio editions came forth before a single Latin classic had been printed. This Latin text, constantly produced or translated, was *accessible to all scholars;* it did not undergo a critical recension."[2] In fact the Bible, in its Latin dress, was just as

[1] *Vide* "Bible" in *Theological Dictionary*, by Rev. Charles Buck.

[2] *The Cambridge Modern History*, p. 639.

accessible to the people as it would have been if it had been in English. Neither more nor less. Lay this fact to heart, namely: *Those who could read Latin could read the Bible, and those who could not read Latin could not read anything.*

The fact is, in the total absence of printed books, and in the great scarcity of written ones, reading was an exceedingly rare accomplishment. No wonder, then, that the first book of any great size that was printed was the Latin Bible, which appeared in 1455. Close upon its heels came quite a number of editions printed in the common language of the people (*vide Young*, p. 366).

We have spoken of the care taken by the Church to safeguard her children from the danger arising from erroneous and misleading versions of the Bible. Here it may be well to expose the favourite myth of which we hear so much in controversies with our Protestant friends, *viz.*, that Martin Luther was the first to give to the world a Bible printed in the vernacular—that is to say, in his own language, which was German. Great importance seems to attach to this. The statement, however, though very interesting, suffers from one little defect, which somewhat robs it of its

value, even as a controversial weapon. And that is, that it is not true! Luther was not born till 1483, and his German Bible was issued only in 1530. But, previous to that date, more than *seventy* editions of the Bible in the different languages spoken by the people of Europe had already issued from the printing presses. The library of the Paulist Fathers of New York City contains, at this moment, a copy of the *ninth* edition of a German Bible profusely illustrated with coloured wood engravings, and printed by A. Coburger at Nuremberg in 1483, the very year in which Luther was born. "Fourteen translations of the Vulgate into German, and five into Low Dutch, are known to have existed before Luther undertook the task; from a collation of these with his Bible it is evident that the 'Reformer' consulted previous recensions, and that his work was not entirely original."[1] Notwithstanding these facts, we are gravely assured by non-Catholics that Luther was the very *first* to give his poor languishing countrymen the Bible in their own tongue. When will Protestants see things as they are? When will they be candid enough to read history aright?

[1] *Vide The Cambridge Modern History*, planned by the late Lord Acton, LL.D., 1902, vol. i., p. 640.

Abbé L. Begin, professor and doctor, tells us that Catholic translations were published in other countries also, long before Luther came to trouble the peace of Europe. "In Spain a Spanish version appeared in 1478," five years before Luther was born. In Italy, Malerini translated the Bible into Italian in 1471, and so popular did it become that this version was republished seventeen times before Luther's Bible appeared, in 1530. In France a translation appeared in 1478, another by Menaud in 1484, another by Guiars de Moulins in 1487, and many others later on. In our own country there were versions in English long before that by Tyndale or of Wickliffe. Blessed Thomas More has observed that "the Holy Bible was long before Wickliffe's days, by virtuous and well learned men translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people, with devotion and soberness, well and reverently read". (In the above passage, quoted by Begin, I have modernised the spelling.) For further light upon this question, over which some still have the hardihood to wrangle, I must refer the reader to *The Old English Bible*, by Abbot F. A. Gasquet, O.S.B. His own conclusion is summed up in the following temper-

ate lines: "In the face of so much evidence it is extremely difficult not to admit the existence in pre-'Reformation' days of some well-recognised and perfectly orthodox version, or versions, of the Holy Scriptures, in English" (p. 136).

At the present day the Bible in the vulgar tongue can be obtained for a few shillings by any one, and the Catholic Church not only authorises its circulation, but strongly encourages its study. All she requires as a preliminary condition is that the vernacular translation be properly made, and that foot-notes explaining the more difficult texts be appended. This is merely a wise precaution against the danger of false meanings being foisted upon, or introduced into, the text. These notes may be compared to finger-posts on a difficult road, and ensure the reader taking the right path. The difficulty and obscurity of certain passages, even in the original, is proved by words already quoted from no less an authority than St. Peter. And these difficulties and obscurities are increased rather than diminished by being done into English.

What, then, is more natural and fitting than that the Church should safeguard her children

from error by giving them her authentic interpretation, at least of such words and sentences that they might otherwise be in danger of "wresting to their own destruction"? Since she knows that human perversity could easily corrupt both the spirit and the letter of the Holy Scriptures, she watches over them with all the solicitude of a mother over her child; she will not suffer the perverse and the self-willed to lay a sacrilegious hand upon the sacred deposit which has been entrusted to her by God; she prevents the pure gold of the Divine word from being changed into vile metal; in a word, she makes use of her incontestable right, while at the same time she performs the most imperious of all duties towards humanity.

We may conclude this chapter by pointing out that the Bible is not the sole source and fount of all religious truth. This is one of the errors introduced at the "Reformation". Among the formulas of the Anglican Church, for instance, we read that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation. Whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man" (Article VI. of the Thirty-nine Articles). The same statement, though not always ex-

pressed in exactly the same words, is made by most of the varieties of Protestant sects. Such is not, however, the doctrine of the Church of God; nor is it the teaching of the Bible itself. No; in defining religious truths, the Catholic Church is not dependent upon any inspired document for her authority. She is able to hand on to us not only doctrines that have been written down with pen and ink, but also doctrines which have been transmitted by word of mouth. To accept the first, and then to reject the second, as Protestants profess to do, is to deprive oneself of a great part of God's revealed truth. It is a strange but nevertheless a true statement, that some persons seem to attach a most extraordinary importance to the mere accident that a doctrine has been written down. They seem to persuade themselves that a statement receives some additional sanction, and that it comes to us with greater authority and weight, solely because it is put on paper. They must evidently attribute some magical virtue to the ink or the pen, quite unsuspected by us. This is very unreasonable, but it is a very common feeling on the part of Protestants. "Is it in the Bible?" they ask, whenever we proclaim any religious truth. Or, "Where shall we

find it in the Scriptures?" is the question they put to us, so soon as we speak of any doctrine they decline to accept. But surely, the only important point concerning any doctrine whatsoever, or any article of faith, is: Did our Lord teach it? Did the Apostles enunciate it? Did St. Peter or St. James or St. John, under inspiration, really preach it? Such are the questions we Catholics ask. Not so with Protestants. They do not inquire: Did Christ *teach* this or that doctrine? No. All they are anxious to know is: Did the Evangelist *write* it down?

Even if Christ stated a doctrine twenty times, it appears to be nothing to them, unless it has been put on paper. With them, everything depends upon the answer we are able to give to the query: Is it in the Bible? Now we, it must surely be admitted, take up a much more reasonable ground. We do not care two straws whether the doctrine be bound up between the covers of the Book or no. That can add nothing to its intrinsic worth. The doctrine is not valuable to us because it is in the Bible, but simply and solely because it is the doctrine of Christ.

We wish to get at His Divine teaching, and

whether we get at it through the actual writings, or through oral traditions, can make very little difference—indeed, no difference whatever. If therefore words and doctrines of our Lord and the Apostles have come down to us by way of tradition, we feel the same interest in them, and the same obligation to believe them, and precisely the same reverence and respect for them, as if they had come down to us by way of writing. We will drink the rich, luscious and life-giving wine of Divine truth with equal pleasure and gratitude whether we drink it out of a golden cup or out of a glass goblet. It is the *quality of the wine* about which we are concerned, and not the quality of the cup that holds it. But are there genuine traditions which we may safely follow? Dear reader, even the Bible itself declares that there are. What is more, it even deems it worth while to distinguish between reliable and unreliable traditions—between the traditions of mere men, *i.e.*, "human" traditions, and "Divine". Thus Christ reproached the Pharisees and scribes for "leaving the commandment of God and holding the *tradition of men*, (such as) the washing of pots and cups: and many other things" (Mark vii. 8). Traditions of that

kind the sacred text naturally condemns, and so does the Church, but there are traditions of another kind which it does not condemn, but approves and commands us to receive. Thus St. Paul, addressing the Thessalonians, writes: "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether *by word* or by our epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 15). Here the Apostle leaves us under no doubt whatsoever, since he actually mentions both the written and the unwritten word, and commands us to receive them both; and both equally. He is most emphatic on the point and goes on to say: "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly". What does he mean here by "disorderly"? He himself explains, *viz.*: "Not after the *tradition* which he received from us" (2 Thess. iii. 6). The preceding words clearly show that, even in St. Paul's time, Christian doctrine consisted of two parts, the written and the unwritten. They also show that both are of equal importance and of equal obligation. To Timothy, St. Paul writes: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast *heard* of me in faith" (1 Tim. i. 13). An exhortation which he could never have

made had he held the view of those who call themselves "Bible Christians". Again, in this same Epistle to Timothy (ii. 2), he writes: "The things which thou hast *heard* from me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou (not to writing, be it observed, but) to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also". What is this if not tradition? When addressing the Christians at Corinth he expresses himself in a similar manner: "Now I praise you that ye . . . hold fast (What? The Scriptures? No; but) the *traditions*, even as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor. xi.). Yet, in spite of these clear and forcible words, our Protestant friends calmly tell us that we are wrong in "holding fast to tradition," or indeed to anything but the *written* words of the Bible! If they themselves would only show their love of the Holy Book by obeying the commands laid down in it, in the texts above quoted, they would soon stop their denunciations of tradition, and commend the Catholic Church for being so much more "Biblical" than themselves. The fact is, the Catholic Church is the only genuinely Biblical Church there is. To restrict ourselves to doctrines stated explicitly in the Bible would be to disregard

its commands and to deprive ourselves of a great deal that Christ taught. St. John observes that "Jesus did many other things, which if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain them" (John xxi. 25). Now it is precisely by means of tradition that the more important and useful of these "many other things," which were never written, have come down to us. And should any fact or truth or practice of importance be in danger of slipping from men's memories, even this should give us no cause for anxiety, since Christ promised that the Holy Ghost should remain for ever in His Church, and "bring all things to her remembrance, whatever He had said" (John xiv. 26). If everything had been written down in black and white, what need would there be of "bringing what He had said to her remembrance?" I will conclude with a quotation: "Jesus Christ, having written nothing, has established His doctrine solely on preaching. The Apostles founded the first Church, and during a long time it supported itself solely on tradition. Both the Jews and pagans became converted, and it is the unwritten word, that is tradition, which has made them Christians. Tradition

has, therefore, been, in the order of time, the first rule of faith of the Christian Church. It made known to Christians in a certain manner the doctrine of Jesus, His miracles, the miracles of the Apostles, and, in general, all the facts that have reference to the establishment of Christianity. Since the beginning of the Church error was often mingled with truth; then the Apostles, either by the living voice, or by writing, each one, either individually or united in council, cleared up the facts, refuted the doctrinal errors and always prescribed to the faithful to keep faithful to the traditions. Such was the origin of the books of the New Testament; they themselves were the work of tradition. They were originally, according to St. Justin, simple memories, addressed to some particular Churches, to relate and explain the facts collected by tradition. These writings, once admitted by the Universal Church, became a new rule of faith."[1] Thus it is clearly seen that the Catholic Church is the only one that fully and perfectly carries out the spirit and the teaching of the Bible; for she and she alone hearkens to the words of St. Paul:

[1] *Vide Ecclesiastical Dictionary*, p. 688.

"Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or by epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 15). The Catholic Church is true to the one as she is true to the other.

CHAPTER V.

SPECIMEN DIFFICULTIES.

The Sacred Scripture is not like other books. Dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of the deepest importance, which, in many instances, are most difficult and obscure.—POPE LEO XIII., *Providentissimus.*

ALTHOUGH the Bible is by far the most beautiful and the most admirable of books, it is nevertheless one of the most difficult to interpret correctly and to read intelligently. It is full of obscure passages, of strange idioms, and of unfamiliar forms of expression. Hence, to the uninstructed, the perverse and the headstrong it may very easily become a source of very serious and real danger. This we have striven to prove, first from the very structure, origin and general character of the Book, secondly from its own express and inspired declarations, and thirdly from the history and experience of past times, more especially of the past four hundred years. "If," writes the great St. Augustine, "there

is no branch of teaching, however humble and easy to learn, which does not require a master, what can be a greater sign of rashness and pride than to refuse to study the books of the Divine mysteries by the help of those who have interpreted them."[1] As Dr. MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, so justly observes: "The Bible, the most sublime of all compositions, is not a book fitted for the unripe understanding of a schoolboy".[2] Hence, too, Bishop Milner, addressing the priests under his charge, writes: "I am confident you will not encourage or countenance the distribution of Bibles or Testaments among the *very illiterate* persons of your congregations *as proper initiatory books of instruction* for them".[3] Now I propose, in this chapter, to invite the gentle reader to consider a few examples of the difficulties to be met in the sacred text, and over which many an over-confident reader comes to grief. I do this because it is always more interesting when we can leave the abstract proposition and come down to some concrete and definite instances. The Old Testament abounds in

[1] *Ad Honorat de util. cred.*, xvii. 35.

[2] *Letters*, p. 10. See note at the end of the chapter.

[3] *Sup. Mem. of Eng. Cath.*, p. 306.

them, but even the New Testament, though written in a more familiar language and at a much more recent date, is not without a liberal share also. And as the New Testament is so much more interesting in itself, and so much more applicable to our own times, and as it is also so much more widely read, I will take from it all my examples.

The danger of misunderstanding and, consequently, of misinterpreting the Bible may arise from a great variety of causes. We will select four of the most common. The first cause is our inability to assign to a particular word its precise meaning and force. Another cause is our inability to determine to a nicety the exact significance of a particular phrase or expression, owing either to its not being current in our own tongue, or else because, though the expression exists in English, its meaning is different. A third cause of difficulty is to be found in the very doctrine that underlies, or which we imagine to underlie, certain acts of the Apostles and Evangelists, or even of our Lord Himself; and which may seem to conflict with our own moral sense of right and justice. And the fourth cause of error is sheer carelessness, inattention and stupidity: perhaps the commonest cause of all.

Our first illustration is from the Gospel according to St. John, chapter ii. "There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage, and the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: *Woman, what is* (*that*) *to Me and to thee?*" The Anglican version is: "*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*"

Now this text has repeatedly been brought forward by Protestants, more especially by Low Churchmen and Nonconformists, to prove that Catholics have no right to show the honour they do towards our Blessed Lady. In the words that St. John puts into our Lord's mouth, they find a sanction and an approval of their own discourtesy and indifference towards the Blessed Virgin. They start with a proposition to which, indeed, we should all cordially agree, namely, that our Lord is our Example; that His conduct and behaviour under every circumstance are the most perfect and the most irreproachable; and then they proceed to ask themselves how He treated His Virgin Mother. Did He, our Model, use gentle, respectful and honourable

words to Mary? Did he manifest any consideration towards her? Their answer is too often an emphatic "No". And they quote the text of St. John as a clear proof. What, indeed, they demand, could be more curt, discourteous and rude than to address her as "woman"! "Woman, what is that to Me, or to thee?" Why, we should not so address even a menial, or a serving-maid. No gentleman would reply in such terms even to a stranger, much less to the mother that bore him, unless, indeed, he purposely wished and intended deliberately to offer her a marked insult. Here then Christ (it is argued) teaches us how we should act towards the Blessed Virgin. He sets us an example as to the manner in which we should disregard her, slight her, and dishonour her. A very fine argument indeed! What a colossal pyramid of folly and of error to build up upon the force of a single word, misconstrued and misunderstood. Now, a better acquaintance with the Greek language would have rescued these men from such a false deduction, and would have completely knocked the bottom out of their argument. "*Woman, what is this to thee?*" does indeed happen to be an exceedingly rude form of speech when made to an

honourable lady by an *English* gentleman. A lady of gentle birth and refinement might justly feel indignant and insulted were a son of hers to address such an expression to her, simply because she petitioned him to grant her some favour. But then our Lord was not English, nor was the Blessed Virgin; and that makes just all the difference. Because the expression suggests insult in English, are we justified in concluding that it suggests insult in every language? Prejudiced people are apt to jump to conclusions too hastily. Before we can draw all the terrible meaning out of the word "woman" that anti-Catholic lecturers and writers do, we must make sure of our ground, and carefully seek to ascertain the peculiar force of the word "woman," not in English, but in the language spoken by Christ. Christ conversed in the Aramaic tongue, but that is not the language in which His words have come down to us. All that we possess of authority is the translation of them made by St. John, into Greek. Therefore our Scripture reader and critic, before he scolds us for honouring our Lady, must be able to do two things. He must be able (*a*) to understand and read Greek, and not only to translate it literally, but (*b*) he must be

sufficiently familiar with its literature and diction to judge of the exact value of words, as used by those who habitually spoke the language. No reader possessing these qualifications would ever dream of setting before us the scene here described, with a view of inducing us to modify or to diminish our respect for the Blessed Virgin. The Greek word is *gunai* (γύναι). It may indeed be translated "woman"; but *gunai* carries with it no disagreeable or low associations, as its English equivalent is apt to do. According to the Greek language and custom, this much-maligned word was used without disrespect, and without reproach, and carried with it no kind of unpleasant insinuation. It cast no slur. It conveyed no insult. We have the very best authorities for the statement we are putting forward. As has already been observed, the word in the original language in which the Evangelist wrote, *viz.*, γύναι, has been translated "woman". Now, setting aside Catholic commentators, let us turn to the famous Greek dictionary by the two Protestant scholars Liddell and Scott, and we shall find, on such unimpeachable authority, that *gunai* means "lady," and, further, that it is not a term of reproach, but "*a term of*

respect". Further, Dr. Westcott, the distinguished Protestant scholar, says that in the word "woman," as employed in the Greek, "there is not the slightest tinge either of reproof or of severity. The address is that of courteous respect, even of tenderness."[1] Indeed, we might almost have gathered as much from the context itself. For though the Blessed Virgin Mary had not pressed her Divine Son to work a miracle, nor even so much as asked Him to do so, but had contented herself with merely pointing out the fact that the wine had run short, He immediately exercises His omnipotence and does her will. What does this show? Why, that *the least wish of Mary* has such influence with Jesus that He treats it as if it were a command. Is further proof needed? Then watch the Blessed Virgin Mary. *She*, at least, with the instinct of a mother and the penetration that comes of exalted virtue, knows full well what the words of Jesus mean, and sees in them no reproach; for what does she do? She calls the waiters and says to them: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye". (That is what Mary says to every devout

[1] *Vide Catholic Dictionary*, Addis, etc., p. 604.

client.) Now study carefully the conduct of Christ. He tells the waiters to fill the jars with water, and He changes it into wine. In fact He does at once what she asks, and does it for *her* sake, even though "His hour had not yet come".

This passage, so far from proving, as so many Protestants would persuade us, that Jesus wishes no honour to be paid to Mary, contains the strongest proof both of the sympathy which Mary feels for her fellow-creatures, her readiness in appealing to Christ, and the prompt and glad assent which He gives to the slightest wish of His Holy Mother. If that is not proof enough, perhaps our readers will be better satisfied with the words of the well-known Richard Whately, *Protestant* Archbishop of Dublin. In a published sermon, to which any one may gain access, this Anglican divine writes as follows of our Blessed Lady, on the memorable occasion of the marriage feast: "She applied to Him when the wine was deficient. His answer has not that roughness indeed which our English translation gives it, from the use of the term 'woman'. The word in the original is one which denoted *no disrespect*, being found in the classical Greek

writers *applied even to a queen.*"[1] Here even a Protestant Archbishop, because he is a scholar and a learned man, openly admits that the word, so far from denoting dishonour, is applied to the highest ladies in the land, even to queens, and this, too, by the best classical writers. How natural, then, for our Divine Redeemer to apply it to Mary, the Immaculate Virgin Queen of heaven and earth. From this example it may be inferred that not every uneducated man may safely interpret the Bible.

Now let us pass to a somewhat different class of difficulties—*i.e.*, difficulties arising from certain forms of expression which suggest a meaning in English which has no existence in the original language. For instance, we read in Hebrews (x. 38) · that the "just man liveth *by faith*," and that "a man is justified *by faith*" (Rom. iii. 28), and St. Paul says, even of himself: "I live *by the faith* of the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20), and so forth. Now many Protestants, meditating upon these words, conclude that faith is of itself not only necessary, which we all admit, but all-sufficing ; and that nothing more

[1] *Sermons on Various Subjects*, by Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin ; sermon ix., p. 226.

is needed for salvation, a statement which is, of course, absolutely heretical. Indeed, Luther did not hesitate to enforce that comfortable doctrine by introducing into the very text of his translation the word "alone"; so that he did not scruple to make the Apostle say, not "man is justified by faith," but "man is justified by faith *alone*," as though faith could take us to heaven without the aid of prayer, or sacraments, or good works. He was indeed "wresting the Bible to His own destruction". Had he been honest and wise he would have soon learned that the Scripture itself employs the same expression (*i.e.*, "is justified," "saved," etc.) in regard to many other things besides faith, and that, therefore, much more than mere faith is demanded even by the Bible itself. The same line of reasoning holds good equally if we apply it to our corporal instead of to our spiritual life. Thus it may be affirmed, and with perfect truth, that "man lives by food". But who would be such a Luther, in the natural order, as to declare that this means "man lives by food *alone*," and that he stands in need of nothing more? Surely when it is affirmed that "man lives by food" it is not meant that he does not require air to breathe or sleep to

refresh his spent energies, etc. Similarly, though man is saved by faith, yet it is not by faith alone. This might, with a little industry, be gathered from the Bible itself. For the same Holy Spirit that inspired the text, "Man is justified by faith," also inspired the texts, "We are saved by *hope*" (Rom. viii. 24) and "By *grace* you are saved" (Eph. ii. 8), while in another place we are told that it is by keeping the Commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." Thus, by comparing one text with another, instead of isolating some special sentence and regarding it apart and by itself, we arrive at a more reasonable interpretation of the inspired volume, and are soon brought to realise that the doctrine, "man is justified by faith," cannot possibly mean by faith *only*.

There is another difficulty often raised by non-Catholic controversialists, which may be solved in a similar manner; that is to say by carefully observing how the same expression occurs in various connections in other parts of Holy Scripture, and by then comparing the passages with one another. Some persons, for example, try to throw doubt upon our Blessed Lady's virginity by appealing to the

following words, laying special stress upon those I have italicised: —

"When Mary was espoused to Joseph, *before they came together*, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 18). "And Joseph knew her not, *till she brought forth* her first-born" (Matt. i. 25). Now the impugners of our Lady's perpetual virginity flatter themselves that they have discovered in these and similar texts a clear indication that the Blessed Virgin lived with St. Joseph *after* the birth of Christ, just as other married women are accustomed to live with their husbands. To say that "A happened before B happened," according to their manner of reasoning, implies that B happened as certainly as A happened, only at a somewhat later date. Therefore, when we read that Mary, the wife of Joseph, was found with child by the Holy Ghost, "before they came together," the sentence, they argue, clearly and most evidently implies that afterwards—at some later period—they did come together. And that therefore she was not *always* a spotless virgin, but the mother of several children. Such a theory, though so abhorrent and hateful to Catholic ears, and so utterly false and heretical, might yet seem to have

some foundation and some semblance of probability, were the words of St. Matthew originally written in English, because, according to the idiom of *our* language, the sense these persons put upon the words would be more or less just and natural. But it is not the natural sense of the original language; and, what is more, it is not the sense of the Bible.

We can affirm this with less difficulty because the passage quoted is by no means the only passage in which the expression occurs. It is met again and again in the inspired volume; and not unfrequently in cases where it is impossible to interpret it as our adversaries would wish. Turn over the Bible to Genesis xxviii. 15. There God, speaking to Jacob, says: "I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest . . . *neither will I leave thee till I shall have accomplished all* that I have said". But clearly, it does not follow from this that God intended to abandon him after He had accomplished "all that He had said". So again when we read in Deuteronomy xxxiv. 6 that Moses was buried in the valley in the land of Moab, and that "no man hath known of his sepulchre *until this present day*," it would not be reasonable to conclude that the sepulchre of Moses had been

known ever since. In 1 Kings xv. 35 we read: "And Samuel saw Saul no more *till the day of his death*". But no one in his senses would conclude from this that Samuel paid Saul a visit after his death. It is written in 2 Kings vi. 23 that "Michol, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death". Are we then to infer that a family was born to her *after* "the day of her death," or that she brought forth children while in the grave? Surely we dare not countenance such an absurdity. Similarly, when St. Matthew says: "And Joseph *knew her not till she brought forth* her first-born" (i. 25) it by no means follows that he "knew her" after that event. We must remember that the force of the Greek idiom and the genius of the Greek language do not exactly correspond with our own. If we put on the words of St. Matthew the interpretation put on them by those who deny our Lady's perpetual virginity, then, to be consistent, we must interpret our Lord's words in a similar manner. For instance, "Behold I am with you all days, even *until the end of the world*" (Matt. xxviii. 20) must be interpreted to mean that after the end of the world He would be with them no longer. In fact, that He would

be their constant companion and friend in time, but would abandon them in eternity. What could be more absurd than to understand them in such a sense?

Difficulties may also arise, not merely from the idioms of one language being different from those of another, but also from the fact of a word in one language bearing a wider and looser meaning than in another. The word "brother" or "brethren" is a case in point. In English the force of the term "brother" is more exact and restricted than in the Greek. It is generally confined, in common parlance, to mean children of the same parents. But this is not so in the language of the Gospel. There "brother" means any close relation, such as nephews, uncles and cousins. Hence, through ignorance of the Greek language, many draw a false inference from the simplest words. Thus our non-Catholic friends read: "Is not this the carpenter's Son? Is not His Mother called Mary, and His *brethren* James and Joseph, and Simon and Jude?" (Matt. xiii. 55.) Or they come across the verse: "As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His Mother *and His brethren* stood without," etc. (Matt. xii. 46), and at once they draw the inference that Christ had

brothers (in our sense of the word) and that consequently the Blessed Virgin must have had sons by St. Joseph, and was not, therefore, "ever a virgin". In these and similar ways, and from sheer want of familiarity with the original language, Bible readers are constantly running off the straight lines of truth into the byways of error. The error to which I have last referred is very often made by our own Nonconformist countrymen, because, according to English usage, the term "brother" is not commonly applied to more distant relations, except in formal sermons and addresses. But other persons, Italians, for instance, however ill-disposed, could never make a mistake, at least *of that kind*, because in Italy it is customary, even at the present day, to speak of cousins as brothers. I remember once expressing some surprise, because an Italian of my acquaintance introduced a person to me as his brother (*fratello mio*), whom I knew could not possibly be his brother. "But," I remonstrated, "he is surely not your brother; you have no brothers?" "Not my *full* brother," he answered, "but my *cousin-brother* (*fratello-cugino*)," or what we should call simply cousin.[1] Difficulties against

[1] For a fuller exposition, consult *Pearson on The Creed*, p. 173, etc.

Scripture sometimes come from the most unexpected quarters, and may arise out of words which to most Christian readers seem clear enough. Thus, Professor Huxley thought he had discovered a very serious objection against the inspiration of the Bible in the incident of the Gadarene swine, which is narrated, with certain slight variations, by the three Evangelists, Matthew (viii. 30), Mark (v. 2) and Luke (viii. 31), who describe how our Lord, after driving devils out of two demoniacs, caused them to enter into a herd of some two thousand swine. The devils then forced the swine over a cliff, so that they were drowned in the sea. Professor Huxley has many objections to offer against this narrative. I confine myself to one only; and that is the violation of justice that the act is supposed to involve. He accuses Christ of an act of injustice in wantonly destroying what belongs to another, observing with some asperity and indignation: "Everything that I know of law and justice convinces me that the wanton destruction of other people's property is a misdemeanour of evil example".[1] He also comments on "the great loss and damage of the innocent Gerasene

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, A.D. 1889, p. 172.

or Gadarene pig-owners," and represents our Lord as worthy of reproach. Now this objection we may answer in two ways. First, we may answer in the words of Mr. Gladstone, who writes: "I have satisfied myself that Josephus gives no reason whatever to suppose that the population of Gadara, still less (if less may be) the population of the neighbourhood, and, least of all, the swine-herding or lower portion of that population, were other than Hebrews, bound by the Mosaic law. Now, this being the case, the punishment inflicted upon the owners of the swine by the permission of our Lord *did not constitute a breach, but rather a vindication of the law;* as a law would be vindicated if casks of smuggled spirits were caught and broken open after landing, and their contents wasted on the ground."[1] The Jews, it must be borne in mind, were not allowed to eat pork. The pig was considered an unclean animal.

But, in the second place, we may answer the difficulty by observing that God is the supreme and absolute owner and proprietor of all things; and that no mere man can claim *absolute* ownership of anything what-

[1] *Vide The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, pp. 273, 274, and the note, p. 295.

soever, not even of his own being. "You are not your own" (Cor. vi. 19). Now, Christ was God as well as man, and as God He certainly possesses supreme dominion over all that is. So that, to speak in this connection, as Huxley does, of "the wanton destruction of *other people's property*" is not to recognise the divinity of Christ. As God, He commands the forces of nature, and brings earthquakes and inundations, pestilence and disease, death and destruction, just as He pleases. "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; He humbleth and He exalteth" (1 Kings ii. 7). "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Ecclus. xi. 14). To deny His right to destroy a man's property, as in the case of the swine, is to deny His unlimited dominion, and therefore His divinity itself. Had He so pleased, He might have destroyed not only the herds of the swine-owners, but their other property also. He might have deprived them of their health and personal comfort, as He actually did in the case of Job, and no one would have the slightest business to question His right or authority. "Who shall say to Thee: What hast Thou done? or who shall accuse Thee, if the nations perish?" (Wisd. xii. 12.) Indeed,

the objection sounds absurd in the mouth of a Christian who believes Christ to be God. Those who deny His divinity may attach some importance to it, but to such these lines are not addressed.

Not content with the undoubted difficulties that exist in the Bible, people sometimes set about creating difficulties, through sheer carelessness, want of observation, or through thoughtlessly jumping at conclusions. Such a case came before me only a short time ago, and as it is a type of many more, I will give it here as a specimen difficulty. A correspondent wrote as follows :—

"Dear Mgr. Vaughan, how can one be expected to believe in the Bible, when even the Apostles themselves contradict one another? Take, for instance, the account of Christ's Ascension. St. Matthew tells us that, 'the eleven went into *Galilee*, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them' (xxviii. 16). Now it is well known that Galilee is about *sixty* miles from Jerusalem. Instead of St. Matthew's, turn to St. Luke's Gospel. There we find quite a different account. St. Luke writes: 'And He led them out as far as *Bethania*, and lifting up His hands, He blessed them, and it came to

pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven'. Now, just as we know Galilee to be about *sixty* miles from Jerusalem, so we also know that Bethania is not more than *five or six* miles from it. If I believe St. Matthew, then I can't believe St. Luke; and if I believe St. Luke, then it is impossible to believe St. Matthew. Now, please tell me, was the spot from which our Lord ascended six miles from Jerusalem, or was it sixty? No reasonable man can say it was both; or swallow so palpable a contradiction.—Yours etc., 'X. Y. Z.'."

This gentleman, whose name, of course, I am not at liberty to disclose, has been in such a desperate hurry to find the Bible at fault, that he has not given himself time to study the text with any care. If the statements of the two inspired writers were indeed as represented, it would constitute a difficulty. But a more careful examination of the respective passages quoted discloses the fact that there is no kind of contradiction whatever. St. Matthew and St. Luke give contradictory accounts of the Ascension, says "X. Y. Z.". Yes, exactly. This is what "X. Y. Z." affirms. But is this really a fact? Is St. Matthew talking of the Ascension at all? Does St.

Matthew so much as mention the Ascension? Does he even distantly allude to it? No, the fact is "X. Y. Z." quotes some words of St. Matthew *on quite another subject*, and then chooses, without the slightest warrant, to apply them to the Ascension, with which, in sober truth, they have nothing whatever to do. No wonder the Bible is "full of mistakes" if men read it in that fashion! Study St. Matthew from end to end and you will be unable to find any account of the Ascension. Then how in the world can *his* account (if he gives no account) differ from or be in conflict with St. Luke's account? This is what we call creating difficulties. The words, quoted from St. Matthew, refer simply to a meeting between our Lord and the eleven, that had been arranged to take place some time during the forty memorable days that elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension. It was on an unnamed mountain in Galilee, and many miles from Mount Olivet, from which Christ afterwards ascended. Why "X. Y. Z." should identify these two mountains, or connect both with the Ascension, we cannot imagine. It is nowhere stated in the text that Christ ascended from the mountain of which St. Matthew speaks.

To say that, at a date not determined, Christ and the eleven "went unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them," is by no means the same thing as to say that He *there* ascended into heaven. If "X. Y. Z." or anyone else likes to maintain that it *is* the same thing, then he maintains more than there is any warrant for in the Bible. And the contradiction is not between one text and another, but between the Bible and "X. Y. Z.'s" false and unwarranted gloss.

I give the above as typical illustrations of common difficulties that are often found by ordinary readers who are left to themselves to unravel the meaning of the inspired volume. They suffice to show that something more than mere goodwill and upright intention are needed on the part of the casual Bible reader, and will, we hope, induce at least some of those who peruse these lines to seek from proper ecclesiastical authority the guidance which alone can ensure their certain attainment of the truths of revelation.

NOTE.

As a specimen of the objections that are made against the practice of the Catholic Church, I will ask the reader to consider the

following letter from one signing himself, "Church of England":—

OBJECTION.

Mgr. Vaughan tells us that, as Dr. MacHale . . . *so justly observes*, "the Bible, the most sublime of all compositions, is not a book fitted for the unripe understanding of a schoolboy". Now, St. Paul thought otherwise, for writing to St. Timothy—who, perhaps, was once a schoolboy—he said, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; *and that from a child thou hast known the Holy* Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus".

The answer to this very shallow objection is sufficiently obvious:—

ANSWER.

There is no parallel whatever between the two cases. In the *first* place St. Paul is speaking of a certain definite individual whose character and disposition he knew. Archbishop MacHale, on the other hand, is laying down a general principle, and legislating not for this or that exceptional case, but for the young and the uninstructed in general. In the *second* place the Apostle and the Archbishop are not even referring to the same thing. The Apostle refers to the *Old* Testament, which, by reason of the testimony it bears to Christ, was able to make Timothy "wise unto salvation". But the Archbishop refers to the Bible *as a whole*, which contains, as St. Peter informs us, "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the

other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16), and which should therefore be either kept from them or given only under certain conditions and with certain safeguards. In the *third* place the Apostle refers to the *Hebrew Scriptures read in the original tongue*, whereas the Archbishop was necessarily referring to more or less accurate English *translations*, which is quite a different matter. *Fourthly*, Timothy studied and learnt the old Scriptures before the countless Protestant sects, which surround us now, had arisen to obscure the meaning of simple words and to create difficulties then unknown. *Fifthly*, he was trained under the careful guidance and direction of his pious mother and grandmother. If the ignorant and the simple could read the Bible under similar conditions in these days, Archbishop MacHale would no doubt have expressed himself differently. "Church of England" does not seem to realise that "circumstances alter cases". Other differences might also be pointed out, but I have said more than enough to show how very wide of the mark are his observations. He supplies us, however, with an excellent example of the way in which even clever and well-educated Protestants misapply and abuse the Holy Scriptures; so his remarks are not without use to our readers.

CHAPTER VI.

EXTERNAL WITNESSES.

The proofs of revelation were constructed by the Divine beneficence, not for the satisfaction of critical minds alone, and therefore reflecting men will not, I think, be led to underrate their value, because they are adapted to the understanding of ***all men*** as men, and so valid, when apprehended, for the few as well as for the many.—*Propædeia*, by WILLIAM R. LYALL, p. 14.

THOUGH many passages of the Old Testament are exceedingly obscure, and though much of the narrative is incomplete and fragmentary, yet considerable light has been cast upon the sacred text by students of writings recently discovered both in Assyria and in Babylon. An enormous amount of history bearing directly or indirectly, and in a greater or lesser measure, upon the ancient Scriptures lies buried in the, as yet, unread and, to most people, unreadable writings of the extinct Assyrian and Babylonian civilisations. Fortunately, their ancient scribes employed neither parchment nor paper as their writing material. Had they done so, scarcely any

vestige of their labours would have survived to the present day. They impressed their strange characters upon the soft clay, and then these clay tablets were put into ovens, and there baked, much in the same way as we now bake tiles or bricks. Time, which soon effaces the marks of a pen upon ordinary paper, produces but little effect on fire-tried bricks. The consequence is that we can now gaze upon inscriptions thousands of years old, which are often far more legible than many a manuscript of comparatively modern date. At this moment there are upwards of one hundred and sixty thousand different inscriptions cut in stone or impressed upon burnt earth collected and preserved in the various museums of the Old and the New World. The British Museum is said to harbour about half of that number, of which more than twenty thousand have been brought from Assur-bani-pal. Though this seems an immense quantity, yet M. A. Condamin informs us that a well-known French *savant*, named M. Pognon, declared to the members of the Oriental Congress in 1897 that not one thousandth part of the ruins enclosing similar treasures, scattered all over the great plains of the Tigris and the Euphrates, has been as

yet unearthed.[1] What interesting truths these ruins may yet reveal, or how far they may be destined, in God's providence, to illuminate the Bible and to illustrate and enforce its teaching can be at present but a matter of speculation. This at least may be said, they are being carefully studied, and, though the language, as Father Delattre, S.J., tells us, is exceedingly complicated and difficult, they have already been made to yield many most satisfactory results.

One or two examples will not be without interest. Thus, among various famous personages spoken of by Isaias, the prophet, is Sargon, who is called in the inspired writings "the King of the Assyrians" (Is. xx.). Half a century ago no mention of this king could be found outside the covers of the Bible; and commentators of the Scriptures were puzzled as to which of the Assyrian potentates the name could belong to. Some of the more captious and critical amongst them began even to doubt whether such a person had ever existed at all, and imagined that they had discovered a serious error. Now, however, thanks to these modern discoveries, all

[1] *Vide La Bible et l'Assyriologie*, by Albert Condamin.

doubts upon the point have been set at rest. Not only has the name of Sargon come to light, but his palace, his history, and even his likeness. So that the veracity of Isaias has been, on this point at least, abundantly vindicated.

Or, let us take a somewhat different illustration. In his *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* Renan maintains (*a*) that the art of writing must be referred to a date some three or four hundred years later than the days of Moses and Josue. And that, being all this time without any knowledge of letters, (*b*) the Jewish people could have transmitted to us nothing but fancies and fables. We do not think it at all necessary to admit this consequence (*b*); but even if we did, it would not at all signify, since the Assyrian tablets are before us to prove that the statement (*a*), from which the conclusion (*b*) is drawn, and on which it depends, is wholly and utterly false. At the close of the year 1887, or, according to some authorities, in the year 1888, three hundred clay tablets, covered with hieroglyphics, were discovered at Tel El-Amarna, on the banks of the Nile. What did these interesting inscriptions turn out to be? Nothing less than the correspondence of Ameonphis

III. and Amenophis IV., kings of Egypt, with various princes and overseers of Western Asia, dating 1,400 years before the time of Christ. We need not occupy space here in setting forth the arguments based upon this discovery. Let it suffice to say, that they have quite satisfied Biblical students that the art of writing was most certainly known to Moses, and that in this, as in so many other points, Renan is altogether misinformed. "To men who took Greece and Rome for the world," writes Archbishop W. Smith, "and could not see beyond the first olympiad, it was natural to believe that writing was an invention more modern than Moses. . . . But it is strange that at this time of day, when Egypt has found her voice again, any scholar can patronise such a paradox. The system of hieroglyphics fully and philosophically developed, and containing all the needful phonetic and even alphabetic elements, is written on monuments erected far more than a thousand years before Moses was born."[1] In fact the same authority informs us that, "to the time of Moses belongs the papyrus Harris, entitled 'The Record of Rameses III.'. It is

[1] *The Book of Moses*, vol. i., p. 14.

144 feet long by 16½ inches wide, and is written in hieratic, though the legends are in linear hieroglyphic. Chabas considers it the most beautiful manuscript in existence."[1] It would seem, therefore, that we need not trouble ourselves much about the objection founded upon the utterly mistaken idea that writing was unknown and, in fact, not invented in the age of Moses. Returning to the question of Babylonian and Assyrian archæology, it is interesting to find such an authority as H. S. Williams, M.D., B.Sc., admitting that "we have here documents in abundance that deal specifically with events more or less referred to in the Bible. The record of kings whose names hitherto were known to us only through Bible references has been found in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, and personages hitherto but shadowy now step forth as clearly into the light of history as an Alexander or a Cæsar." And again: "As, one after another, the various tablets and cylinders and annalistic tablets have been translated, it has become increasingly clear that here are almost inexhaustible fountains of knowledge, and that sooner or later it may

[1] Chabas: *Le Papyrus Magique Harris*, p. 2. Quoted by W. Smith, vol. i., p. 17.

be possible to check the Hebrew accounts of the most important periods of their history with contemporaneous accounts written from another point of view". H. Smith Williams' general conclusion is decidedly satisfactory and encouraging. He says: "The general agreement everywhere between the Hebrew accounts and contemporaneous records from Mesopotamia proves beyond cavil that, broadly speaking, the Bible accounts are historically true, and were written by persons who in the main had access to contemporaneous documents".[1]

While speaking of external and, if we may so express ourselves, accidental testimonies to the truth of Holy Scripture, we may perhaps make mention here of the ancient catacombs, some of which may still be visited in the neighbourhood of Rome. They consisted of great subterraneous chambers and passages excavated, for the most part, out of the soft rock, or "tufa". The most famous are to be met with along the Via Appia, one of the chief roads leading out of the Eternal City. In the first ages of persecution, when the Christian faith was proscribed, and when literally

[1] *Vide* Prefatory Essay to vol. xxvii. of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, by H. Smith Williams, pp. 13, 14, 15.

hundreds of thousands of Christians were put to the most cruel forms of death for daring to practise their religion, it was not safe to assist at or to celebrate any of the rites of the Catholic Church in public. As a consequence, during the long centuries that these inhuman persecutions lasted, the faithful were accustomed to retire beneath the ground, where they were instructed and baptised, and received Holy Communion free from observation, and out of reach of their pagan fellow-citizens. Most of them were also buried there, their bodies reposing peacefully beside the hallowed remains of such as had actually shed their blood for Christ, and whose relics were interred in recesses made to receive them, on either side of the long winding corridors. The galleries, hewn out of the rock, are long and narrow, being about eight feet high and five feet wide, and winding about in all directions. Every here and there these passages open out into spacious, vaulted chambers, where a large number of persons could assemble at once. In these subterraneous halls, or chapels, the solemn services of the Church were held, and devout men and women would crowd round the bishop or the priest, to listen to his words of burning faith and piety, or to join with him

as he offered up the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, much as the faithful do to-day in the beautiful cathedrals that more peaceable times and more tolerant Governments have enabled us to raise up to the honour of the same Divine Victim.

It is calculated that the catacombs around Rome alone number about forty, and that their dismal corridors, if straightened and placed end to end, would reach to a distance of nearly nine hundred miles; or, to put it more graphically, would extend from Brighton to Edinburgh and all the way back again! while the innumerable tombs enclose between five and six millions of bodies, or, at least, what remains of them. But what, it may be asked, have all these interesting facts to do with the Bible? Well, they have a good deal to do with it, as we shall now proceed to show. The early Christians not only worshipped God, and paid reverence to the saints in these strange dwelling-places, but they carved or painted inscriptions on the walls, and on the tombs and altars, and the learned have been able to decipher these inscriptions, and to learn much concerning the ancient faith, as professed by those who, more than a thousand years ago, left behind them these interesting traces.

Just as I can tell at once, at the present day, that a man believes in the doctrine of Purgatory, if I see that he has put a headstone on his wife's grave with R.I.P. carved upon it; so, in a similar way, many other doctrines held by the first Christians may be inferred and demonstrated by a careful study of the inscriptions that still remain. Then, in addition to these inscriptions, there are to be found also symbols and figures illustrating and indicating their faith as well as their piety, and large numbers of paintings on the walls, or frescoes, as they are called, which have thrown much light on the religious life and practice of those bygone ages. A careful and attentive consideration of all these relics of antiquity, by learned students of those times, has helped enormously to confirm—though with Catholics no such confirmation is needed—the antiquity of practices and beliefs and devotions which are common in the Catholic Church at the present day. I refer especially to the doctrines of the Primacy of St. Peter; of the Sacrament of Baptism; of the Holy Eucharist; of the veneration of the saints and martyrs (and more especially of the Ever-Blessed Mother of God); of prayers for the dead; of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,

and so forth. We here learn that, in all these points, the interpretation of the words of Holy Scripture as made by the Catholic Church to-day corresponds with the interpretation made by the primitive Church; and that it is not the Catholic but the Protestant national and local churches and sects that have departed from the purity and soundness of the teaching of the Apostles.

No man, unless he first take leave of his senses, can make the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, for instance, square with the evidence that we find in the catacombs. Any one professing obedience to the National Church, "as by law established," wandering through the catacombs, and reading the writing on the walls, and contemplating the frescoes, would feel himself to be strangely out of place there. Unless singularly dull and obtuse, he would soon realise that an impassable gulf lay between his creed and that of those whose voices once resounded through these now vacant halls. Perhaps my readers would like me to follow my usual practice and give an example or two of what I mean. We will take the doctrine of the invocation of saints.

Suppose an impartial inquirer wishes to

ascertain whether it is the Catholic Church or the Protestant Church of England that teaches the ancient and primitive doctrine concerning our attitude towards the saints, what would he do? He would compare each with the doctrine of the catacomb-Christians. The Church of England—which, being now more than three hundred years old, ought really to know better—still teaches that it is wrong to invoke the saints. A few months ago we took up a copy of the *Western Morning News*[1] and read an account of a battle-royal between the Anglican clergyman, Rev. H. Leeper, vicar of St. Stephen's, Devonport, and Mr. S. D. Brooming, the headmaster of the Church schools, concerning the kind of prayers to be used in the schools. The Rev. Leeper wished the children to pray to the Blessed Virgin, and Mr. Brooming did not feel that such a thing should be tolerated; so, as was very natural, the Bishop of Exeter was appealed to. Writing from The Palace, Exeter, 17th January, 1903, his Lordship relieves himself in the following words: "The invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints is contrary to the teaching and spirit of the Church of England. It ought not to be allowed either

[1] 2nd February, 1903, p. 5.

in the churches or in the schools of the Church of England. It should be resisted by loyal members of the Church in my diocese. The children of the poor are on no account to be taught the 'Hail Mary' or other invocations of the Virgin and saints and angels in our Church of England schools," etc. (Signed) "HERBERT. EXON." This may fairly be taken as an authoritative utterance, in so far as that very comprehensive Church is capable of formulating one. It also agrees with the Church of England's Articles, one of which asserts that "the Romish doctrine concerning the invocation of saints is a fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God". However, it is only fair to say that even though we quote the words of the Article we are by no means sure that *all* members of the National Church would subscribe to them in practice.

The Anglican historian, Lord Macaulay, tells us that even in his day (and things have gone from bad to worse since) "the Church of England, so far from exhibiting unity, was in fact a bundle of religious systems without number".[1] So some of those that make up

[1] Essay on Gladstone's *Church and State.*

this "bundle" may decline to be guided by the Articles, which even the most extreme Churchman will acknowledge are not infallible. Now the Catholic Church, on the contrary, teaches all her children to address the holy ones of God and to seek the prayers of angels and of saints, and, above all, of the Immaculate Mother of God. There is no doubt or ambiguity as to that. The Council of Trent (25th Session) decrees that "the Saints reigning together with Christ offer their prayers to God on behalf of men, and it is good and useful to invoke them as suppliants, and to take refuge in their prayers, support and help, on account of the benefits to be obtained from God, through His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is our ONLY Redeemer and Saviour". The Catechism of the Council of Trent further explains that "God and the Saints are *not* to be prayed to *in the same manner;* for we pray to God that He Himself would give us good things and deliver us from evil things; but we beg of the Saints (simply) that they would be our advocates, and *obtain from God* what we stand in need of".[1] Which Church is right? Which Church is following the apostolic traditions? Let us plunge into the bowels of the

[1] Dr. Donovan's translation, p. 424.

earth, and consult the ancient and timeworn inscriptions on the walls of the catacombs. Did these first members of the Church, who composed and carved these inscriptions with the very atmosphere of the Apostles still, as it were, hanging about them, and with the teaching and discourses of our Divine Lord still echoing in their ears, pray to the Blessed Virgin, and invoke the saints? To be sure they did. The proofs are still found cut into the stone. Prayers to the saints and to the martyrs carved by the hands of the catacomb-Christians survive to this day to tell their tale, and to hand down their message. "The very stones cry out" in testimony of the antiquity of this doctrine. We regret we cannot reproduce the frescoes nor give facsimiles of the words. But since that is impossible, we will at least give a few specimens, in ordinary type. Consider them carefully, and you will see how they prove that, more than a thousand years before Luther lived, and before the Protestant religion "made in Germany" took possession of England, Christians were in the habit of invoking the saints. Here is a sepulchral inscription found on a tomb in the cemetery of Callistus :—

ATTICE SPIRITVS TVS
IN BONV ORA PRO PAREN
TIBVS TVIS.

Which, being translated, runs as follows: "O! Atticus, thy spirit is in good, *pray for thy parents*". Bianchini refers this inscription to the first century of the Christian era. In the cemetery of Priscilla, on the Tyburtine Way, and close to the Church of St. Laurence, the following was found:—

ANATOLIVS FILIO BENEMERENTI FECIT
QVI VIXIT ANNIS VII. MENSIS VII. DIE
BVS XX. ISPIRITVS TVVS BENE REQVIES
CAT IN DEO PETAS PRO SORORE TVA.

We may translate the above thus: "Anatolius made this to his well-deserving son who lived vii years vii months and xx days. May thy soul rest in God. Pray for thy sister." In the original inscription there is the figure of a dove after the word ISPIRITVS, and the figure of a fish after the word DEO; and after the word PETAS there is carved a human figure in the attitude of prayer. We can quite understand the figure symbolising prayer; but the fish may seem a strange thing to carve in such a place; but our wonder gives way to admira-

tion when we discover that the fish is a symbol of Christ, because the Greek word for "fish" (*ichthus*) contains the initial letters of the Greek sentence: "Iesous Christos Theou huios Soter," "Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour".[1] We must not fill our little volume with these evidences, but will give just one more. The martyr Sabbatius was buried in the cemetery or catacomb of SS. Gordian and Epimachus, and the oblong niche in the wall containing his bones was closed by a marble slab on which was engraved—

SABBATI DVLCIS ANIMA PETE ET ROGA PRO FRATRES ET SODALES TVOS.

The writer would have been more grammatical perhaps had he put *Pro fratribus* instead of *Pro fratres;* but that is a detail. He teaches us what is of far greater moment than grammar. He teaches us certain facts concerning the faith that burnt so brightly in the hearts of the first Christians. The words turned into English are: "O! Sabbatius, sweet soul, petition and pray for thy brethren and companions". Sometimes the inscriptions are in the Greek tongue. We give simply the

[1] Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ. *Vide Monumenta Ecclesiæ Liturgica*, vol. primum, No. 3101.

translation of one of these, which is as follows: "To Anatolius, our first-begotten son (thou), who wast given to us for a short time, *pray for us*". These early Christians, it seems, were always asking the deceased, whom they believed to be with God, to pray and to make intercession for them. It was not until 1,500 years after the time of Christ that the Church of England, together with the other Churches that broke away from Catholic unity, discovered that it was very naughty indeed—in fact, quite improper—to ask the prayers of any favourite of God, however holy and however exalted. St. James in Holy Scripture says: "Pray for one another that you may be saved: for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (v. 16). Protestants think that the prayer of the just man "avails much," but only so long as he is living on this earth, and subject to sin and imperfection; but that when purified and sanctified from all stain of earthly defilement in heaven, his prayers are no longer of any use. At all events they must, by no means, be asked for.

But what proof is there in Scripture of any such limitation? Is a "just man" less just because he has left this earth? Is he less dear to God because he is now clothed

with eternal glory and exalted among the saints? Is he less closely in communion with God and are his prayers of less avail, because he has now entered heaven? Why, in the name of common sense, should a holy man be any the less able to plead for others in heaven than on earth? We cannot imagine. Nor can the Church imagine. Nor did such an extravagant idea enter into the anticamera of the brains of the catacomb-Christians. No! The inscriptions on the walls of the catacombs prove that our handling of that and other texts of Holy Scripture is the only authentic and legitimate one, and the same to-day as in the earliest ages!

CHAPTER VII.

UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

Although the studies of non-Catholics, used with prudence, may sometimes be of use to the Catholic student, he should nevertheless bear well in mind that the sense of Holy Scripture can nowhere be found incorrupt outside the Church, and cannot be expected to be found in writers, who, being without the true faith, know only the bark of Sacred Scripture, and never attain to its pith.—Pope Leo XIII., *Providentissimus.*

Though the authority of the Church is all that a Catholic needs to satisfy him as to the genuineness and veracity of the Holy Scripture, yet it is always pleasing to be able to point also to other and independent testimonies. Of some of these we have already spoken in Chapter VI. Now we wish to call attention to yet another, of a somewhat different character. We refer to what have been described as the "undesigned coincidences," which are so frequently to be met with in various parts of the inspired volume. Indeed, instances of this kind are scattered up and down throughout the pages of the Sacred

Book, and are such as to preclude the possibility of their being the result of design; hence they form a very strong proof of the truthfulness and honesty of the writers. If circumstantial evidence is sufficient in a court of law to determine a man's innocence or guilt, even in cases of murder, in which his very life is quivering in the balance, then it ought surely to be enough—in so far as it is available—to satisfy a reasonable critic of the genuineness of the Holy Bible narrative. Now what I propose doing in the present chapter is to set before the reader some examples of these coincidences without design, taken from an exceedingly interesting work by Rev. J. J. Blunt, B.D., who, with infinite pains, has collected quite a considerable number. Though I cannot undertake to use his own words throughout, which would extend the length of this book beyond all reasonable bounds, I wish it to be understood from the outset, that I am indebted to him for every example that I shall bring forward in the present chapter. The object of bringing such coincidences forward at all is to make more manifest the truth, that the various inspired writers described facts and not fancies, and that they narrated events as they observed

them, or as they learned them, and that they were not men who were banded together to impose a false or an imaginary story upon a too credulous public, as some would have us believe. The way in which the different Biblical writers support one another, and strengthen each other's narrative, by what, in purely human documents, we should call wholly accidental observations or casual remarks, let fall by the merest chance, is very remarkable, and will strike some minds at least, on account of their very spontaneousness, as the most valuable form of evidence that can be had.

We will take our first illustration from the Gospel of St. Matthew, where we are told that Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw "James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with their father *mending their nets:* and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him." Here St. Matthew informs us that "they were mending their nets," but he offers us no explanation as to how these nets came to be broken; and but for St. Luke's account of the same call of these fishermen to the Apostolate, we should probably have been left in our ignorance. Now turn to St. Luke v.

There he also tells us how our Lord stood by the lake, but then he goes on to describe how "when He had done speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master we have toiled all the night and taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a great number of fishes, *and their nets broke!* And they beckoned to their partners, who were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. . . . Simon was astonished and all that were with him . . . and so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. . . . And when they had brought their ships to land they forsook all and followed him." The circumstance to be remarked is this, "that of the miracle St. Matthew says not a single word; nevertheless he tells us that Zebedee and his sons were found by our Lord, when He gave them the call, *mending their nets.* How it happened that the nets wanted mending he does not think it needful to state, nor should we have thought it needful to inquire; but it is impossible not to observe that it perfectly harmonises with the incident mentioned

by St. Luke that in the miraculous draught of fishes the *nets broke*. This coincidence, slight as it is, seems to bear upon the truth of the miracle itself. For (1) the *mending* of the nets, asserted by one Evangelist, gives probability to the *breaking* of the nets mentioned by the other; (2) the breaking of the nets gives probability to the large draught of fishes; and (3) the large draught of fishes gives probability to the miracle" (p. 255). The coincidence does not, of course, prove the miracle, but it forms around it a very strong atmosphere of truth.

We have another instance given us on p. 275 in connection with the words of St. Matthew, who, in describing the Passion of Christ, says: "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee" (xxvi. 67). Now any one, unacquainted with the other writers of the Gospel story, would be very much puzzled over these words. He would feel that they were incomplete and that something more was wanted to explain the situation. What could the soldiers mean by asking Him to prophesy who had struck Him? Where is the propriety of such a demand, considering that the offenders stood before His very eyes?

Surely He could not help seeing who delivered the blows? Had the records of the other Evangelists been lost, "no critical acuteness could have possibly supplied by conjecture the omission which occurs in this passage," observes Rev. Blunt, "yet without that omission being supplied, the true meaning of the passage must for ever have lain hid". But when we take up the Gospel according to St. Luke, the passage grows clear, and the difficulty is solved, for he is careful to tell us that the men that held our Divine Lord, "*blindfolded* Him, and smote His face" (xxii. 64). And it was not *until His eyes were covered* that they sought to make Him prove His power by pointing out to them the striker. Yet St. Matthew makes no mention of that circumstance. "Such an oversight is difficult to account for on any other supposition than the truth of the story itself, which sets its author above all solicitude about securing the reception of his conclusions, by a cautious display of the grounds whereon they were built" (p. 276).

Then another very interesting connection is pointed out between a sentence of St. Matthew and one of St. John, mentioned on p. 281. The former writes: "And when he

(*i.e.*, St. Peter) was gone out *into the Porch*, another maid saw him, and said unto them, This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth" (xxvi. 71). Now the strange thing in this sentence is the statement that the maid so readily recognised St. Peter; since he was quite a stranger to her, and had come into the house late at night, and under circumstances of some tumult and disorder. How could she have singled him out at once as a disciple of Christ? Well, St. Matthew throws no light upon this point. True, but then St. John does. If we consult St. John's Gospel (xviii. 16) we shall find that after Jesus had entered, "*Peter stood at the door without*, till that other disciple went out, who was known to the high priest, and *spoke unto her that kept the door*, and brought Peter in". In this way the maid's attention was naturally directed to St. Peter, and thus it is at once explained how she recognised him in the Porch. Here, then, as Rev. Blunt observes, is a minute indication of veracity in St. Matthew, which would have been lost upon us had not the Gospel of St. John come down to our own times. Each Apostle in this instance seems to testify, though quite unconsciously, to the truthfulness of the other.

Here is another excerpt from Rev. Blunt's collection, bearing on the text of St. Matthew xiv. 1: "At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said *unto his servants*, This is John the Baptist, who is risen from the dead": "St. Matthew here declares that Herod delivered his opinion of Christ *to his servants*. There must have been some particular reason, one would imagine, to induce him to make such a communication *to them*, above all other people. What could it have been? St. Mark does not help us to solve the question, for he contents himself with recording what Herod said. Neither does St. Luke, in the parallel passage, tell us to whom he addressed himself. He baldly states that 'He was desirous of seeing Him (Christ) *because he had heard many things of Him*'. By referring, however, to chapter viii. of this last Evangelist, the cause why Herod had *heard so much about Christ*, and why he talked to *his servants* about Him, is sufficiently explained; but, observe, it is by the merest accident! We are there informed 'that Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed

of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils; and (*note*) *Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward*, and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto Him of their substance'. And again, in Acts xiii. 1, we read, among other distinguished converts, of 'Manahen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch,' or who, in other words, was his foster brother. We see, therefore, that Christ had followers from among the *household of this very prince*, and, accordingly, that Herod would very naturally discourse with *his servants* on a subject with which they were much better informed than himself" (p. 271). Thus, we are supplied with a very good reason why he should have taken his servants into his confidence.

These and many other instances of wholly undesigned coincidences seem to set a seal upon the truthfulness and honesty of the inspired writers. However trivial and accidental they may be, they point out the lesson for us, and help to confirm the faith of waverers. As the motion of the merest straw or the bend of a blade of grass may suffice to tell us in which direction the wind is blowing, so the meanest and most insignificant event narrated by Apostle or Evangelist may possess

such striking, and yet such clearly accidental relations to other events as to fill our minds with a strong sense of their veracity. To appreciate the value of these relations and connections more fully we must refer the reader to the Book itself. We will satisfy ourselves here with just two concluding quotations. We are told by St. John vi. 5 that when Jesus had reached a certain desert place He "lifted up His eyes and saw a great multitude come unto Him, and He said unto *Philip*, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Now the question that naturally arises in our minds is, "Why should this question have been directed to Philip in particular rather than to Peter or James or John or to one of the other more prominent Apostles? If we had the Gospel of St. John and not the other Gospels we should see no particular propriety in this choice, and should probably assign it to accident. If, on the contrary, we had the other Gospels, and not that of St. John, we should not be put on the inquiry at all, for they make no mention of the question having been addressed *expressly to Philip*. But by comparing St. Luke with St. John we discover the reason at once. By St. Luke, and by him alone, we are informed

that the desert place where the miracle was wrought was *belonging to Bethsaida* (ix. 10). By St. John we are informed (though not in the passage where he relates the miracle, but, which is worthy of remark, in another chapter altogether independent of it, *viz.*, i. 44) that *Philip was of Bethsaida.* To whom, then, could the question have been directed so properly as to him who, being of the immediate neighbourhood, was the most likely to know where bread might be bought?" (P. 283.)

Our last excerpt concerns the Ascension of our Lord into heaven. So great and marvellous an event must have impressed itself very vividly upon the minds of all those who had witnessed it. St. John, whose love for his Divine Master seems to have surpassed even that of the other Apostles, must have treasured up the memory of that consoling and encouraging ascent even more than all the rest; yet, strange to say, St. John's writings contain no history whatever of the Ascension. Are we to conclude then that he did not know it, or that it was untrue? Nothing of the kind. Quite the contrary. We gather from his own words that he was so fully conscious of the miracle, and took it so completely as a recog-

nised and undisputed fact, that it no more occurs to him to gravely relate the circumstances of it than it would occur to a present-day historian to burden his pages with a long description of the rising of the sun. Hence, though he omits to describe it, he alludes to it and mentions it, though quite incidentally, as a fact familiar and well known to all. Thus he refers to it when he observes that "no man hath *ascended up* to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven" (iii. 13). So in another place He asks: "What if ye shall see the Son of Man *ascend up* where he was before?" (vi. 62.) Again in xx. 17, when describing the meeting between St. Mary Magdalene and our risen Saviour, St. John describes Him as saying to her: "Do not touch Me, for I am not yet *ascended* to My Father, but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I *ascend* to my Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God" (p. 314). No man, and least of all such a devoted and loving Apostle as St. John, could have recorded such words without realising their bearing on the stupendous miracle of Christ's glorious Ascension into heaven. The very fact that these sentences bear only indirect and accidental allusions to

the fact renders them all the more striking and convincing. For it is clear from their whole setting that St. John was fully acquainted with this crowning miracle in the life of our Lord.[1]

[1] Consult the work by Rev. J. Blunt from which I have so largely drawn in this chapter. It is a volume of 361 pages, and published by J. Murray in 1847.

CHAPTER VIII.

HONOURED AND DISHONOURED.

Any Catholic who should dare to lay a sacrilegious hand on the smallest portion of this heavenly Book would be looked upon as guilty of profanation and impiety. Protestants cannot say as much; since the first comer, armed with the scissors of criticism, or guided by passion, caprice or reason, lost to all sense of shame, cuts right and left, makes his own comments, and in many places eliminates or retrenches the inspired text.—PROFESSOR BÉGIN, D.D.

THERE are some persons who make great professions and talk very "big," and yet do practically nothing. Others there are, on the contrary, who speak with much reserve and who blow no trumpets before them, and yet contrive to get through a vast deal of excellent work. For mere loud and dramatic professions of love and reverence for Holy Writ it would be hard indeed to beat the Bible societies of the Protestant Churches. They cannot say enough about the Holy Book, and the respect and the veneration that are its due; while they gird at the Catholic Church for not making more of it, and for her general

apathy and indifference about disseminating copies broadcast, up and down the world. If, indeed, we were to judge from mere talk and bluster and agitation and meetings, we might be led to suppose that Catholics had no regard or interest in the Bible, and that Protestants alone know how to value this gift of God and to treat it in a befitting manner. But when, from mere idle words, we turn to consider hard facts, then we are driven to a very different conclusion. We find that no Church holds the inspired writings in such high esteem, or treats them with such genuine care and consideration, as the Catholic Church. She, and she alone, has constantly and consistently guarded them, so far as it lay in her power, from abuse, ill-usage and injury, and rescued them from desecration.

The Protestant Bible societies, on the contrary, have exposed the Bible to every kind of indignity and ill-usage. Again and again have they handed over the Divine Book to those who were utterly uninstructed and wholly incapable of reading it to advantage, or of even catching its drift. By allowing every one, no matter what his state and condition, to interpret it for himself, they have so confused the sense of simple words that no man when left to

himself, amid such a Babel of tongues, can feel any security or certainty as to the message the Book really contains. Further, they have not only translated it, or caused it to be translated, into barbarous and unfamiliar languages, but have allowed this to be so imperfectly and even so atrociously done, as to shock and horrify, as well as to puzzle those very persons who are expected both to read it and be edified by it, if not actually converted on the spot. A few specific instances will show what we mean. Thus we are assured that the *Canara* version, used in the neighbourhood of Goa, is so execrably rendered that it can excite only amusement and ridicule in those who read it. "There is hardly a single verse," says M. Dubois, "which is correctly rendered; and no Indian possessing the slightest instruction can preserve a serious countenance in reading such a composition."[1] The Hindostani version is, in places, almost as bad. This may be inferred from a single example. Thus the sentence: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" is rendered: "Do no justice, that justice be not done to you".[2] Dr.

[1] 43—*Annales*, tome iii., p. 31.

[2] 44—"Baptist Missionary Account," 1819, Appendix to Report.

Carey's *Kunkun* translation was described by a native pundit who spoke a little English as "bad letter, and no language at all!" "Owing to the glaring mistakes with which they abounded, the sense of the original is sometimes completely lost, and the meaning ludicrous and absurd." "On account of their monstrous errors and their barbarous style, our sacred writings," say the missionaries, "are thought to be the work of a madman." Again, the version of the Scriptures translated by the Church of England missionaries of Cotta, we learn from Sir E. Tennent, was described, even by their own nominal converts, as "*blasphemous*" (p. 50). The Maori translation is equally serviceable as a powerful means of bringing the word of God into contempt. "The effort to turn a jargon, like the Maori, into a pure language, by the missionaries," says a Protestant writer, "is a decided failure, and the words they have to coin are ludicrous samples of language-making; very few Maoris understand it" (p. 53).

It is not only of the deplorably bad translations, often undertaken at an enormous cost, that we complain, but still more of the unseemly use to which the Holy Bible is so frequently put. Yet this is a consequence almost

unavoidable, if the Protestant system of wholesale dissemination of the Scriptures be followed and approved. To scatter tons of Bibles among people who are as yet utterly unacquainted with Christianity, and who can feel no reverence and scarcely any interest in the writings of prophet or evangelist, is surely not the way to promote either the true interests of religion, or respect for the sacred writings. It may be all very well for Mr. Tomlin, an Anglican clergyman, to write to his employers: "We are taking to Siam twenty-two good-sized chests, well filled with the bread of life!" but, unfortunately, it is bread so badly kneaded and baked that scarcely any one in Siam is to be found who can digest it. Speaking of the Chinese, a Protestant missionary openly declares: "We have had no proofs that the thousands of books thrown among this people (*i.e.*, the Chinese) have excited one mind to inquire concerning them, have induced one soul to find a teacher among the foreigners in China, or have been the means of converting one individual" (p. 27). As to the Malay Scriptures, "no less than seven versions have been printed. The Rev. Howard Malcolm, who was specially deputed to investigate and report on their subsequent fate, did so in these

candid words: 'Many thousands have been distributed, but, so far as I can learn, with scarcely any perceptible benefit. I did not hear of a single Malay convert on the whole Peninsula'" (p. 28). In fact, this Protestant form of propagandism, so entirely contrary to the whole spirit and commission of Christ, is most lamentable and distressing to any one who is at all concerned or interested in securing respect for the word of God. Protestant sectaries often represent the poor heathen as being extremely desirous to obtain copies of the Holy Book, and no one denies this. Only it must be remembered that the cause of this eagerness, as Archdeacon Grant says, "cannot be traced to a thirst for the Word of Life, but to the secular purposes and to the unhallowed uses to which it has been turned, and which are absolutely shocking to any Christian feeling" (p. 35). These Protestant "Bibles have been seen," says Dr. Wells Williams, a Protestant agent, "on the counters of shops in Macao, cut in two for wrapping up medicines and also fruit, a purpose for which the shopman would not use the worst of his own books" (p. 36). Sometimes these Protestant Bibles were turned to more profitable, though equally profane,

purposes. They were not unfrequently unsewn and the pages used as wall paper.

"At Singapore," writes Bishop Courvezy, "I saw the walls of two houses entirely covered with leaves of the Bible; this profanation, however, is not greater than when they are employed to roll round bacon and tobacco" (p. 36). Eye-witnesses tell us that in the frontier towns of China whole cases of Bibles, for which simple old ladies and foolish old gentlemen have disbursed their precious gold, were constantly sold by auction, and purchased at the price of old paper, especially by shoemakers, grocers and druggists. M. Boucho writes from Pulo Pinang: "I have myself interrogated many intelligent heathens as to the use which they make of the Bibles distributed to them. They have invariably replied that they employed them for ignoble purposes" (p. 36). The Abbé Albrand was a great Catholic missionary, and drew so many souls into the Church, not by Bible scattering, but by preaching and teaching, that Mr. W. Earl (himself a Protestant) eulogised him for his "great success in converting the Chinese". One day, hearing an American missionary boast that he had distributed "twelve large chests full of Bibles

in a few months," the said Abbé Albrand remarked: "He must have a great reputation among his countrymen, who count the number of conversions by the number who have accepted Bibles; but I, who am *on the spot*, know the uses to which they are destined. There is not a day but some object passes through my hands enveloped in the leaves of some Protestant publication. How many houses are there, in Singapore alone, of which ceilings and walls are covered with the leaves of some hundreds of Bibles in the form of tapestry!" (p. 37.) Marchini, speaking from actual observation, reports that the Bibles are sold by the weight to shoemakers, who convert them into charming little Chinese slippers. A director of the Chinese Seminary at Pulo Pinang writes: "I have myself heard a Chinese declare that he was very grateful to the Bible Society for supplying him with paper for a use, which I dare not name (was it, possibly, to curl his hair with?), and he assured me that this was the *ordinary* fate of the Bibles which were distributed to the Chinese" (p. 38). Very much the same thing is found in other countries; in Africa, for instance, thousands of Bibles are scattered, but to very little purpose. If the Africans do

not read these books they are ingenious enough to find another use for them. M. Bessieux, writing from Gaboon, says that he, in company with other European residents, had witnessed "a grand distribution of portions of the Old Testament among the negroes," and that "scarcely had the children got possession of the sacred volume when he saw the leaves of the Bible converted into pretty kites" (p. 59). Referring to the Kaffirs, Col. Napier facetiously observes that the Protestant missionaries' "attempts at converting have hitherto proved an utter failure, and the Kaffirs, it is well known, have converted, to our cost, the missionary Bibles into ball cartridges or wadding". Mr. M. Parkyns, speaking of Abyssinia in his time, says: "Among the many persons I have met with who received Bibles, one man in particular had two copies given him, which, as might have been expected, he sold the same evening for a jar of beer, and then got drunk on the strength of it" (p. 61). In fact, it has been well said that the English Bible societies are simply "a vast and successful organisation for supplying the heathen world gratuitously with waste paper" (p. 75). The foregoing examples of the uses to which the Protestant versions of the Bible have been

put, through the mistaken zeal or disastrous indiscretion of the various Bible societies, are taken from the first volume of P. W. Marshall's *Christian Missions*, published by "Burns and Lambert" in 1882, therefore only about twenty years ago. The numbers given within parentheses refer to the pages of that work, where the proof and authority of each statement may be found and verified by those who choose to take the trouble. If any one, therefore, wishes to assure himself of the accuracy of these various quotations let him consult that work, which is full of interesting information.

It rather needs re-editing and bringing down to the present day, as it is to be feared that things have not much improved since Marshall's time. Just consider, for example, what Mr. Alexander Mitchie, a Protestant resident in Tientsin, writes[1] only twelve years ago: "A real difficulty begins to be felt also with regard to the Bible itself. The most strenuous efforts have been made to circulate its contents everywhere, and more especially in literary China. *Where the missionaries could not penetrate, the book could be sent, and where they might provoke*

[1] *Missionaries in China*, A.D. 1891.

opposition by their bodily presence the Scriptures might be quietly studied in chambers with much hope of future harvest. Till lately not a doubt was breathed as to the absolute wisdom of this procedure, but the unloosing of one tongue led to the unloosing of many, and at the last Conference in Shanghai, the propriety of the indiscriminate circulation of the Bible, without note or comment, was freely canvassed. It was an unpleasant discovery, after thirty years of work at high pressure, to find that when the harvest was looked for, tares—nay, brambles and baneful weeds—instead of wheat, had covered the ground. Of the possibility of such a result the *blasphemous* uses to which the Tai-ping rebels turned the Old and New Testaments might have afforded the missionaries some warning. But they seem to have gone on wholly unaware what effect the Bible was producing on the minds of the thousands into whose hands it had been put. The more thoughtful heads—and it required some courage from them to say so—now recognise that the Bible is *not a book to be indiscriminately read* by people quite unprepared for its teachings, and out of sympathy with its spirit." This *Protestant* verdict is quoted in *The Mission Field* by His Eminence Cardinal Moran, p. 15.

I was only the other day that a report of at speech by the Dean of Ripon appeared in the leading London journal, from which it would seem that he too still believes in and encourages the mere scattering of the Bible. "The Dean dwelt on the vast circulation of the Bible, and said, while the living voice was important as the ordinance of God, *the Bible often acted alone, and was the power of God!*"[1] Persons, however, who are more wide awake, who see further, and who are not hampered in their speech by their position, are apt to enunciate sounder judgments. Thomas Carlyle, the old Sage of Chelsea, for instance, strikes perhaps a truer note when he observes that "the Bible Society, professing a high and heavenly structure, is found on inquiry to be *altogether an earthly contrivance*, supported by collection of moneys, by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue and chicane; a machine for converting the heathen".[2] Yes. A machine indeed, but certainly not of God's designing, nor in any sense a supernatural contrivance; and effective chiefly in bringing the sacred text into derision, and Christianity itself into disfavour.

Now turn to the true and divinely constituted

[1] The *Times*, 26th November, 1902.

[2] *Essays*, vol. ii., p. 234.

custodian of the Book, the Catholic Church, and see with what reverence and respect she has ever treated it. In the first place it was she that gathered its scattered parts together, that decided the canon of Scripture, and determined to a nicety what should be and what should not be included among the inspired writings. Then she employed thousands upon thousands of monks during many centuries in multiplying copies of the Bible, writing the whole out by hand (*Young*, p. 369), and in some cases entirely in letters of gold, on parchment stained a gorgeous purple—facts sufficiently expressive of the importance that she attached to the Holy Book. Many copies were exquisitely and profusely illuminated and enriched with elaborately designed letters, and beautifully illustrated with various designs in brilliant colours. Such copies are still to be met with in museums and national libraries, and they tell their own tale, which all but the wilfully blind may understand. While the sects seek to evangelise by the modern method of scattering copies of the Bible, the Church, in accord with the teaching of the Bible itself, seeks to evangelise and to convert *as our Lord and the Apostles did, viz.*, by preaching and by oral teaching. Her missionaries to foreign

peoples follow the example of Christ, who, we are told, "began to do and to teach"—to do first, and to talk afterwards; to practise first, and then to exhort and to teach. In this way they succeed. They do not expose the Bible to ill-usage and to dishonour by distributing it broadcast among people utterly unacquainted with even the elements of Christianity—a veritable casting of pearls before swine—but they reserve it till their neophytes can appreciate its value and its spiritual import.

Indeed, the Catholic Church is careful that all her children should entertain the highest veneration for the Bible. She inculcates this lesson at home as well as abroad, and in many most practical ways. Thus, to take a few instances, her chief liturgical offices are largely made up of extracts from the Bible. The solemn Vespers and Compline, perhaps the most familiar of all, and which the faithful are most accustomed to attend, are composed almost entirely of the Psalms of David. Even the Mass, the chief and grandest of her services, is most closely associated with the Bible. The Missal, containing the Gospels and Epistles, occupies a place of honour on the altar; the officiating priest is ordered not

only to read the Gospel out aloud so that all can hear it, every time he offers up the Adorable Sacrifice, but he is also instructed to bow his head and to kiss it, after it is read, as a public sign of his respect. In solemn masses even still greater care is taken to impress the faithful with the dignity and exceptional excellence of the written word of God. It is first solemnly carried by the Master of Ceremonies and given to the Deacon. The Deacon then proceeds with it to the centre of the predella, where, after genuflecting, he places the Holy Book on the middle of the altar. Even then he does not at once proceed to the singing of the Gospel, but, first of all, kneels on the edge of the predella, and, being "profoundly inclined," as the rubric directs, begs God to make him worthy to pronounce the hallowed words. "*Munda cor meum*," he prays, "Cleanse my heart and my lips," etc. After this prayer he takes the Missal, and kneeling in front of the Celebrant, beseeches him for his blessing, saying: "*Jube, Domine, benedicere*". He then presents the Book to the Sub-Deacon to hold; opens it, and makes the sign of the cross on the extended page, which he is about to read, and also on his own forehead, mouth and breast,

as though to arm himself with that sacred sign, before daring to utter the dread words of inspiration. Still he pauses. There is yet something more prescribed before he is allowed to begin. He must take the thurible, and incense the Book with three double swings. Then, at last, with the sacred ministers and the entire congregation standing, as a profession of their faith in the Gospel and of their reverence for the word of God, the Deacon solemnly sings the particular passage of Holy Scripture appointed for the day. After this the Missal is taken up to the Celebrant, and he publicly, and as the representative of the assembled multitude, kisses it devoutly. In these and in similar ways, which may be witnessed in any public Catholic church where High Mass is being sung, the Church inculcates a reverence for the inspired word of God in the minds and hearts of her children.

How different is the usage to which the Bible is exposed outside her pale! And how sad it is to observe the treatment it receives at the hands of so many non-Catholics. As to her priests, we may truly say that the Catholic Church insists upon their study of the Bible, throughout the whole of their ecclesiastical training. With seminarists and divines the

Bible is both a book of study and a book of devotion. Learned professors are appointed to teach it, and to explain and interpret it. In almost all our seminaries many hours are spent each week in exegesis and hermeneutics and in commenting and annotating the text of the various inspired writers. The number of most learned and most profound works dealing with the Scriptures, and composed by Catholic authors, would of themselves form a vast library. No book has ever called forth so much comment, or such learned and such devotional treatises, as the Bible has called forth, and still calls forth, from the zealous children of the Catholic Church. Yet some would persuade us that the Catholic Church despises and undervalues the Bible! Because, I suppose, we do not send out "chests filled with the bread of life" to every barbarous tribe! No, we have a better use for such sacred things. Why, every theologian, every canonist, every professor or writer who treats of ecclesiastical subjects, is constantly quoting the authority of the Bible. Every preacher, catechist and instructor of Catholic youth is incessantly appealing to it. The Holy Scripture comes before us in one way or another at every turn. We cannot escape from it.

Further, as though the Church could not go far enough in her love and appreciation of the Bible, she lays a most solemn obligation upon all her clergy; on sub-deacons, deacons, priests and bishops and archbishops, including cardinals and popes, to read a portion of the Bible every day of their lives. I refer to what is called "The Divine Office," or "The Breviary," which is largely made up of the Psalms of David and of extracts from the Gospels, with commentaries by the Fathers. This office is no mere act of spontaneous devotion, but a solemn duty, binding under grievous sin. In many of the seminaries, more especially abroad, the young aspirants to the priesthood are taught from an early age both to read the Bible and to treat it with the utmost respect. I may mention, in passing, just one instance, because it comes within my own personal experience. I refer to the practice in force at the "Grand Séminaire" at Bruges, where it was my privilege to pass two happy years. There each of the theological students, numbering about a couple of hundred, was required (apart from his class work, which of course included hermeneutics) to read a portion of the New Testament every morning and a portion of the Old Testament every evening, for

devotional purposes, and to do so *on his knees.* A practice so assiduously followed in youth will leave its effect in after life. Hence it will surprise no one, except such as open their hearts to slanderers, of whom there are many when the Church of God is concerned, to hear that even the most famous and most occupied ecclesiastics, not content with the mere recital of their office, will devote no little thought and attention to the Bible itself. Perhaps a specific instance may be of interest. Let us then take up the Life of Bossuet, the famous and learned Bishop of Meaux. "Go where he might," narrates his biographer, "Bossuet was never without his Bible or his New Testament, travelling, driving from place to place, in society, walking, even during the long intervals of High Mass he might be continually seen with it in his hand, often closed, his forefinger between the leaves, while he pondered deeply the words he had just read: and almost every time he entered into his study his first act was to take a pen and rapidly write down the thoughts and impressions he had gained. He was continually quoting St. Jerome's words to Nepotian: 'Let this sacred Book never leave your hand,' and he used to say he had ever found it an unfailing source of doctrine and

holiness of life. . . . He used to read Holy Scripture continually, as if he had never opened it before (p. 6). During his last illness this saintly Bishop had the Gospel of St. John read to him no less than *sixty* times, besides returning continually to chapters vi., xv. and xvi., and the Epistles of St. Paul. . . . The Abbé de Saint André says that Bossuet sometimes would make him read over the same chapter five times running, while he sucked up its strength and consolation."[1] Floquet remarks that, "La Bible, lue, relue chaque jour, scrutée, pénétrée, est pour l'ardent docteur (*i.e.*, Bossuet) une merveilleuse et inépuisable source d'instruction, de bonheur".

[1] *Vide Bossuet and His Contemporaries*, p. 570.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIBLE WITHIN THE CHURCH AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

For the sacred writings which contain the word of God, and for the traditions of the wise and good respecting it, we are almost wholly indebted, under Providence, to the zeal and exertions of the priests and monks of the Church of Rome, during the Middle Ages. . . . Copying the Bible was a task of infinite pains and perseverance, to which (for gain was out of the question) ***nothing but the conscientious and unwearied industry of a religious copyist was equal.***—CH. BUTLER, *Horæ Biblicæ*, pp. 35-36.

WE made some mention, at the close of the last chapter, of the respect and veneration in which the Catholic Church has always held the sacred writings, but this fact is so little realised by "our friends, the enemy," and is at the same time of such importance, that it will be well to set before the reader some small portion of the enormous amount of evidence on the subject that is locked away in old documents and books not accessible to the ordinary inquirer. Let me then begin by

observing that to transplant ourselves in spirit to what Protestants commonly call "The Dark Ages," but which we, with juster reason, describe as "the Ages of Faith," is to transplant ourselves to a period of the world's history when neither the art of printing nor the art of paper-making had been invented. At the present day the entire Bible may be purchased for a few shillings, the New Testament for a few pence. But in the good old days, when England was a Catholic country, and in full communion with Rome, and when her archbishops, one by one, as they were consecrated, publicly swore obedience to the Pope, the Bible was a very expensive luxury. This may be easily realised by a little calculation. Thus, the whole of the inspired writings contain 35,877 verses; these run into 12,783 folios. Supposing the scribe to write on both sides, he would fill 427 skins of parchment. Now, it has been calculated by L. Buckingham, that the parchment, properly prepared, could not be purchased even at the present day for much under £85, and that the copying, in the usual engrossing hand, would come to about £133, making a total of £218 for a single copy of the Bible. Try and realise that, and then ask yourselves,

How many Protestants, at the present day, would possess a copy, if they had to spend over two hundred pounds in the purchase of one? People do not take these circumstances into account when they talk so glibly about the "Romish" Church keeping the Bible from the laity, in the ages of faith. Their ignorance of history deceives them. It was not the Church; no, it was their enormous and prohibitive price that interfered so seriously with the more general circulation of the Scriptures. Considering the cost of production, the wonder is rather that the Catholic Church was able to extend, as widely as she did, the knowledge of the written word! There is a most interesting work, in four large volumes, entitled, *Concilia M. Britanniæ et Hib.*, and edited by D. Wilkins. It consists of a collection of ancient documents, and since D. Wilkins was a Protestant, even Protestants will not dispute the authenticity of the documents he has gathered together. Now in this work we find a good deal of evidence regarding the attitude of the Church towards the Bible before our unhappy country was, as Cardinal Manning used to say, "robbed of the true faith" and driven into heresy in the sixteenth century by such very convincing arguments

as hanging, disembowelling and quartering. So long ago as 950 the Canons of Ælfric decree: "Every priest, before he is ordained, must have the arms belonging to his spiritual work—that is the holy books, *viz.*, the *Psalter*, the Book of *Epistles* and the Book of *Gospels*, the *Missal*, the Book of Hymns, the Manual, the Calendar, the *Passional*, the *Penitential* and the Lectionary" (Wilkins, vol. i., p. 250). So again, in the Constitutions of Reculfus of Soissons, the Bishop writes to the clergy: "We admonish you to be careful to have a Missal, a Lectionary, a Book of the Gospels, a Psalter, etc." Then he adds: "If, however, any one of you is unable to obtain *all* the Books of the *Old* Testament, *at the very least* let him diligently take pains to transcribe for himself the first Book of the whole sacred history, which is Genesis, by reading which he may come to understand the creation of the world" (*Conc.*, ix., p. 418). The Rule of St. Pachomius decrees that "there shall be no one whosoever in the monastery who shall not learn to read and *get by heart* some part of the Scriptures, at the very least the New Testament and the Psalms". I wonder how many Nonconformist or Anglican clergy, at the present day, "get the whole of the New Testa-

ment by heart," to say nothing of the Psalms! The eighth Council of Toledo, A.D. 835, requires that "each Bishop should, at stated periods, make a regular inquiry throughout his diocese for the purpose of ascertaining (among other things) whether every priest could rightly interpret the Epistles and Gospels, and whether he knew the whole of the Psalms by heart" (Conc. vi., p. 406). In Eddius' *Life of Wilfred* we read that "he learned the four Gospels by heart," and that, as Venerable Bede remarks, was nothing unusual, but "according to the general custom" (Bede, *Ecc. Hist.*, I., v., c. 19). "The distribution of the Bible over the seasons of the Christian year was canonically regulated. Here is the formula given by Gerbert's anonymous liturgist: 'From the first of December to the Epiphany, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel; from the Epiphany to the Ides of February (Feb. 13), Ezekiel, the minor prophets, Job; in the spring, until Holy Week, the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges; from Easter to Pentecost, the Catholic Epistles, Acts, Revelation; then for the summer the four Books of the Kings and Chronicles; from the beginning of autumn to December the first, the Sapiential Books, Esther, Judith, Machabees, Tobit'" (P. Batiffol, p. 102). The

fact is, the Scriptures were the daily bread of the priests and monks of old.

By far the greater portion of the works that they have transmitted to us is made up of commentaries on different portions of the inspired writings. Taking St. Bede, our own glorious saint, as a single illustration, we find that out of one hundred and thirty-nine works from his pen (Cologne edit.) sixty-four consist of Biblical commentaries. Yet we are gravely told that Catholics cared nothing and knew nothing about the Bible, and that it was left to Luther to *find* the Bible for the first time at Erfurt, about 1507! In this way, as in so many others, the Church, like her Divine Founder, is calumniated and misrepresented. Were it not for man's cupidity and love of money in those lawless times a vastly larger number of Testaments and Bibles and commentaries would have survived to our day, to prove the love and veneration of the Church for the Holy Book.

Indeed it was precisely because the esteem of our Catholic forefathers for the word of God induced them to adorn and beautify and enrich with precious stones the sacred volume that rapacious and unscrupulous men were tempted to rifle the monasteries and libraries

of these treasures and to turn them into hard cash. For the sake of the precious metals and the stones and jewels that often studded their covers they would burn or otherwise destroy the writings, for which they cared nothing, and would carry away only their gold or silver encasings, for which they cared a great deal. Hundreds and hundreds of monastic libraries were thus destroyed and scattered; and with them an incalculable amount of mediæval manuscripts, which would otherwise have told us a great deal more than we now know concerning the time and labour which the ancients spent in studying and transcribing the Holy Scriptures. "One among the misfortunes consequent upon the suppression of the monasteries," writes Dr. Collier, an Anglican bishop, "was an ignorant destruction of a great many books. . . . The books, instead of being removed to royal libraries, to those of cathedrals, or the universities, were frequently thrown into the grantees, as things of small consideration. Now these men oftentimes proved a very ill protection for learning and for antiquity; their avarice was oftentimes so mean, and their ignorance so undistinguishing, that when the covers were somewhat rich and would

yield a little, they pulled them off and threw away the books, or turned them to waste paper; and thus many noble libraries were destroyed, to a great public scandal and an irreparable loss to learning."[1] Other writers of the same Anglican sect tell very much the same story. Thus we read in Fuller's *Church History*, l. vi., p. 335, that "the Holy Scriptures themselves, much as the Gospellers pretended to regard them, underwent the fate of the rest. If a book had a cross on it it was condemned for popery, and those with lines and figures were interpreted the black art, and destroyed for conjuring." "Whole libraries," exclaims the author of *Letters of Eminent Persons from the Bodleian*, "were destroyed or made waste paper of, or consumed for the vilest uses, . . . broken windows were patched up with remnants of the most valuable MSS. on vellum, and the bakers consumed vast quantities in heating their ovens." Bale, the Anglican Bishop of Ossory, informs us that "a great number of those who purchased these superstitious mansions (*i.e.*, the monasteries) reserved the books in their libraries, some to serve their jakes, some to scour their

[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, ii., l. iii., p. 166.

candlesticks, and some to rub their boots; and some they sold to the grocers and soap-sellers; and some they sent over sea to the bookbinders, not in small numbers, but at times whole ships full, to the wondering of foreign nations".[1] Sometimes small fragments were left behind by these marauders, and have come down to our time, to show how greatly Catholics of old esteemed the word of God. When we remember that even single copies of the Gospels were so richly adorned with gold and jewels as often to weigh sixteen or seventeen pounds, and that others were so gorgeously encased that twenty pounds of pure gold were sometimes used in their binding; and that some copies, as, for instance, that preserved at Hautvilliers, were actually even *written* in letters of gold, we can well understand how buccaneers, freebooters and fighting men, hard up for the means of paying their soldiers or of prosecuting a campaign, should force an entry into the monasteries and seize the Biblical treasures from the defenceless monks. Many specific instances of Bibles, precious not only from a spiritual but also from a purely material

[1] Bale, Decl. in *Leland's Journal*, 1549.

point of view, are to be met with in the course of history both at home and abroad. For example, we learn (*Conc.*, vii., p. 1083) that a copy of the Gospels, bound in pure gold and studded with costly gems, was presented to a certain church by Pope Leo III.; and that Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, who flourished in the ninth century, had the Gospels written out, for his own cathedral, in letters of gold and silver, and bound in plates of gold, resplendent with jewels (*Flodoardi Historia*). The great majority of these exceptionally beautiful and costly editions were to be found in cathedrals and monastic institutions, but some were also occasionally to be met with among the possessions of devout laymen, as we find from the study of old wills and legacies which are still preserved. Thus, Ederhard, Count of Friuli, in the ninth century left to his children at his death one entire Bible and several copies of the Gospels, all sumptuously bound either in ivory or in silver or in gold.

So far as she could the Catholic Church strove to make all her children familiar with the Bible. In the absence of any other means she caused her religious to spend a very considerable portion of their time in multiply-

ing copies. And because, even with all their efforts, they could not supply a sufficient number to satisfy every one, she caused copies to be placed in public positions, so that even those who could not afford a couple of hundred sovereigns to purchase one for themselves might come and make use of the volume whenever they were so minded. Indeed, the placing of a common Bible in some place freely open to all comers was considered a highly meritorious act, and one deserving of great commendation. Pious and generous-hearted people, when dying, used often to bequeath a "copie of the Bible, fairly writ" for the use of the congregation of their own parish. Thomas de Farnylaw, who was Chancellor of the Church at York, is an instance in point. Feeling his end to be near, he left instructions in his will (A.D. 1378) that his Bible and concordance should be left to the Church of St. Nicholas at Newcastle, "there to be chained, for common use, for the benefit of his soul" (*vide* Register of Wills at York). This was quite an ordinary practice. Here is another instance from St. Bede (*Vit. Ceolfr. in App. Op. Min.*, 325): "Ceolfrith, Abbot of Wearmouth, had three copies made of the entire Bible; one he forwarded as a

present to the Pope, but the other two he had placed in an accessible spot in two different churches, in order that, as St. Bede explains, 'all who desired to read any chapter in either Testament might be able at once to find what they desired'". The usual practice was to attach one end of an iron chain to a ring set in the cover of the Bible, and the other to a staple, firmly fixed in the wall. This enabled the reader to draw the precious volume from the shelf, and to turn it and open it just as he wished, while, at the same time, it prevented him from either mislaying it, or even walking away with it altogether. These few instances will help the general reader to judge how much truth there is in the accusation that the Church has always kept the Bible from the laity altogether, and has ever done her utmost to make it an unknown book.

Only the uneducated and the unread can really believe such extravagant assertions. Educated men, even the most ultra-Protestant, of course know better. And as it is always an advantage to summon witnesses from among our natural adversaries I will end this chapter by a quotation from two such gentlemen. Thus, the Rev. Dr. Cutts writes: "Some people think that the Bible, in the

Middle Ages, was very little read; whereas, the fact is that the sermons of the mediæval preachers are more full of Scripture quotations and allusions than any sermons in these days; and the writers on other subjects are so full of Scripture allusion that it is evident their minds were saturated with scriptural diction". He then quotes Sir T. More as saying: ". . . The clergy keep no Bibles from the laity but such translations as be either *not yet* approved for good, or such as be *already* reproved for naught (*i.e.*, bad), as Wycliffe's was. For, as for old ones that were before Wycliffe's days, they remain lawful, and be in some folk's hands."[1] Our next quotation is from the *Quarterly Review* (October, 1879), which says: "The notion that people in the Middle Ages did not read their Bibles is probably exploded, except among the more ignorant of controversialists. But a glance at Dean Goulburn's *Life of Bishop Herbert de Losinga* is enough to show that the notion is not simply a mistake. It is one of the most ludicrous and grotesque of blunders.

"If having the Bible at their fingers' ends

[1] *Turning Points of English Church History*, p. 200, 1874.

could have saved the Middle Age teachers from abuses and false doctrine they were certainly well equipped. They were not merely accomplished textuaries. They had their minds as saturated with the language and associations of the sacred text as the Puritans of the seventeenth century." This is undoubtedly true. In fact we shall find that every grade of society, and almost every department of human life, fell, in a greater or lesser measure, under the influence of the written word of God. To begin with, the most learned men in the whole country were ecclesiastics—the cardinals, the bishops and the monks—and they were literally soaked and saturated through and through with Holy Scripture; then the children of all classes who came to be trained and taught at the monastic schools were carefully instructed in the inspired word of God; at the universities the best youth of the country received lectures in Holy Scripture; and even the poorest and most illiterate of the population were continually having the teaching of the Bible brought before them by the preachers and missionaries, whose discourses were in a great measure made up of quotations from Holy Writ, a great portion of which they learned by heart.

Some of these remarkable men, such as Arnold, Bishop of Soissons, and Thierry, Abbot of St. Hubert, for instance, are said to have committed almost the whole to memory.

Then the paintings and mural decorations would speak to the eyes of those multitudes who could not read, and bring to their mind the most salient scenes from the Bible narrative. Miracle plays, mystery plays and village theatricals, when scenes taken from the inspired book of prophet or evangelist were carefully rehearsed and then acted before the whole village or township, also served to keep alive in the hearts of the people the lessons that we in these days learn perhaps less readily and less pleasantly from the Bible itself. Mrs. C. Brookfield observes that "from the tenth to the fourteenth they flourished greatly, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth attained their highest perfection. They were given at all the great feasts, *The Birth of Christ* and *The Shepherds* at Christmas, *The Passion* at Easter, and so on. The monks were usually the authors and the actors, though we find Bishop Grosstête and Archbishop Langdon both occupying themselves with writing these scriptural plays.

"We are told that England was the great

home of these dramas. It may have been the earliest, but the truth is that in the twelfth century they were universal. They were played with state and magnificence in Madrid, Verona, Lisbon, Florence, and in Germany; and indeed all over the Continent we find remains, and even up till to-day survivals of them.

"A mystery performed at Palermo about this date cost 12,000 ducats for each performance, and comprised the entire history of the Bible from the Creation to the Incarnation."[1] Then there were also what were called "block books" or Bibles of the poor (*Biblia Pauperum*), which were of great practical help to those who were unable to make use of manuscripts. They were not, of course, Bibles, in the strict sense of the word, but consisted of collections of somewhat rude yet effective prints or picture representations of scriptural subjects. These were first carved on wooden blocks and then printed off on

[1] "On another occasion," says Mrs. Brookfield, "we hear that a priest playing Judas was nearly dead when hanging, 'for his heart failed him,' whereupon he was quickly unhung and carried off, and in that play it appears that the mouth of hell was very well done, for it opened and shut when the devils required to go in or out—and it had two large eyes of steel."

sheets. In these and in many other ways the Church exercised her ingenuity in her laudable endeavours to bring to the mind of even the simplest of her children the doctrine inspired by God and contained in the sacred books. When the story of man's redemption, or the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, or the commission to "Go and teach all nations," or any other event or doctrine had been taught and explained and earnestly impressed in burning words upon the faithful by the priests from the pulpits, these block books served to recall the doctrine to their minds, and refreshed their memories concerning all that they had been told. Indeed, the more we know of history the more we shall be impressed by the extraordinary love and reverence and devotion the Catholic Church has ever manifested for that Divine Book, of which God Himself is the Author, and of which His imperishable Church alone is the authoritative custodian and infallible interpreter.

CHAPTER X.

INSPIRATION.

All the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can coexist with inspiration, that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it absolutely and necessarily, as it is impossible that God Himself, the Supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and unchanging faith of the Church, solemnly defined in the Councils of Florence and Trent, and finally confirmed and more expressly formulated by the Council of the Vatican.—LEO XIII., *Providentissimus.*

BEFORE bringing our little dissertations on the Holy Bible to a close, it may be well to state, as clearly as we can, the teaching of our Holy Mother the Church concerning certain important points connected with the Divine Book, at least in so far as they are likely to be of practical interest to the faithful in general. We will begin with the explanation of a word, which is always cropping up when we touch on scriptural grounds—I mean the word "inspiration". Inspiration may be

defined as—a supernatural impulse of the Holy Spirit of God, acting in such a manner on the minds of certain privileged men, that whatever they write in obedience to this Divine influence, must be ascribed to the said Holy Spirit, as to the principal Author. Or the definition may be expressed somewhat differently, as—a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the sacred writers are moved to commit certain truths to writing, and by which they are so illuminated and directed during the process, that they cannot err, but will write infallibly what God directs (*vide* 2 Pet. i. 21 and Rom. iii. 2). From this definition it follows that what is written under inspiration has, in the strict sense, God for its Author (*Auctor libri Deus*). πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος (2 Tim. iii. 16). This at once lifts up the Scriptures into a unique position, immeasurably superior to that of all other documents, however excellent and good.

If a zealous and devoted servant of God writes a book, the Church may signify her approbation, and give it her full ecclesiastical sanction and approval. She may go even further, and solemnly declare that the said document is wholly free from all error. But

far more than that is supposed and implied by the term inspiration. That a piece of writing should be inspired, God Himself must have dictated or in some reliable way communicated it. It is not enough that the Holy Spirit should assist the scribe *negatively*, by preserving him from all error, and by hindering him from misstating or misrepresenting facts. No. It is requisite that God should move him *positively* to enunciate the truths which he writes. The purely negative assistance of the Holy Spirit safeguarding a man from propounding error and falsehood is what every Pope enjoys, when, as supreme teacher, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals, to be held by the whole Church—*i.e.*, when he pronounces an ex-cathedra utterance, "urbi et orbi". But for inspiration, properly so called, a direct, immediate and positive impulse is required as a necessary condition. Hence the distinction between "ex-cathedra" Papal definitions on the one hand, and the "inspired" books of the Bible on the other, is to be found chiefly in this, that the former *contain* the word of God, whereas the latter *is* the word of God. From this fact we must not conclude that the inspired writers were freed from all thought, or

that effort and research were never necessary on their part; nor may we suppose that they wrote (like certain modern mediums) while in a trance, or as mere machines. No. They retained their own characters and individualities—a fact sufficiently manifest in their style and composition; and, though they may not always have quite understood the full import and content of their message, yet they always acted as intelligent and self-conscious agents (*vide* Franzelin, p. 308). It must be further observed that "inspiration" is not the same thing as "revelation". A great many things in Holy Scripture are revealed as well as inspired; for instance, all those truths which involve mysteries and prophecies, and which exceed the unaided power of man to discover for himself. But a considerable number of other things, with which the inspired writers were already well acquainted, or which they could at all events readily find out for themselves, were inspired without being revealed.

This fact may be learned from the Bible itself. Thus the writer of 2 Machabees ii. 27 clearly implies as much, when he observes: "As to ourselves indeed, in undertaking this work, we have taken in hand no easy task, yea rather a business *full of watch-*

ing and sweat . . . yet, for the sake of many, we willingly undertake the labour". The conclusion, then, to which these considerations lead us may be summed up in the following proposition: Some portions of Holy Writ are revealed, and some portions of Holy Writ are not revealed; but every portion of Holy Writ is inspired.

The next question that naturally suggests itself is: Does inspiration extend to the actual words of Holy Scripture, or merely to the truths that the words contain? Some have gone so far as to hold that every single word and every single syllable, and every stop and point, were dictated by God. This was certainly at one time the view of many Protestants. It was held, notably, by certain Swiss heretics, and may be found expressed in their formularies, towards the latter part of the seventeenth century, A.D. 1675.[1] But such a view is rejected by the Catholic Church, and is indeed inconsistent with the very character of the Bible itself. Furthermore, such an opinion would be exceedingly difficult to harmonise with the following facts, namely, first: The inspired writers distinctly assure us that their compositions were put together with much

[1] *Vide P. Minges, Comp. Theol. Dog. Gen.*, p. 207, § 5.

labour and fatigue, and frequent watchings. Second fact: A marked distinction of style is apparent between one writer and another, which cannot reasonably be attributed to any external source, but only to themselves. Third fact: In quoting the Old Testament many quote from the translation (the Septuagint) and not from the original, and sometimes not quite literally even from that, which would hardly be the case if each and every individual word were directly inspired. But perhaps the most evident proof of all lies in the fact that, in relating the self-same doctrine—even the most momentous—different writers, though all inspired, yet express themselves in a different manner. Take, by way of illustration, such a solemn and important event as the institution of the Holy Eucharist. There are four accounts given; one is by St. Matthew, one by St. Mark, one by St. Luke and one by St. Paul. Though each account is, of course, substantially the same, there are undoubtedly verbal differences; yet each of these writers was guided by the Holy Ghost. Omitting, simply for brevity's sake, the consecration of the Bread, let us compare the four independent accounts of the consecration of the Wine. We will begin with

St. Matthew's Account.

A.—"And, taking the chalice, He gave thanks; and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood, of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (xxvi. 27-28).

St. Mark's Account.

B.—"And having taken the chalice, giving thanks, He gave it to them. And they all drank of it. And He said unto them: This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many" (xiv. 23-24).

St. Luke's Account.

C.—"In like manner (taking) the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the New Testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you" (xxii. 20-21).

St. Paul's Account.

D.—"In like manner (He took) also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood,

this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me" (1 Cor. xi. 25).

Though SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul each describe the identical scene, and though each teaches the self-same truth, yet each expresses himself in his own way, so that each of the four differs from the three others, both in the (*a*) actual *arrangement*, and also (*b*) in the precise *choice* of the words used; a fact which it would be difficult to reconcile with the theory of verbal inspiration, which, as a matter of fact, no Catholic now holds. We have given the English translation, but if reference be made to the Greek text, corresponding discrepancies will be found.

Before passing to another point it may be well to remind the gentle reader that, even though verbal inspiration is not taught by the Church, yet she does most clearly insist upon the doctrine that God, by His inspiration, so acts upon the sacred writers that their writings *infallibly* contain the true and genuine sense that God intends. Hence, as the learned Cardinal Franzelin declares, the inspired writer will, with infallible certainty, so select his words, and so form his sentences,

that they will really and truly express the truths and the doctrines to be conveyed. Consequently, inspiration is not to be strictly limited to the subject-matter of the Divine message, but it must be made to extend to the language also, and to the choice of words, *in so far* at least as is necessary, in order to secure the genuine and adequate enunciation of the said message. Hence theologians teach that God not only moves the writer to make a statement, but that He likewise ensures its being duly and properly set forth. For, were this not the case, then the message, even though inspired by God, might nevertheless fail to reach us, since, under such a hypothesis, we could never be absolutely sure that the writer, thus left to himself, would make his meaning sufficiently clear and precise.

The theory that is sometimes put forward by irresponsible writers, that the Bible is inspired only in part, or only in respect to certain particular classes of truths, cannot be admitted. Hence, the following opinions or theories must be rejected as out of harmony with the common teaching of the Church :—

1. That the Bible is inspired only when treating of matters concerning faith or morals.

2. That the Bible is inspired only in regard to those things which the sacred writer deals with directly and *ex professo*; and that incidental remarks and passing observations, or what have been called the *obiter dicta*, do not fall under the Divine influence. As examples of such *obiter dicta* we may instance what is written in Tobias xi. 9 concerning Tobias' dog, namely, that on a certain historic occasion it "wagged its tail," or we may refer to what St. Paul remarks in his Epistle to Timothy, namely, that he had "left his cloak at Troas" (2 Tim. iv. 13).

3. That only religious and ecclesiastical and spiritual truths, or such as are inextricably bound up with them, are to be taken as inspired, but that profane and secular matters, and all statements concerning history, geography, geology, astronomy, and other departments of purely human knowledge, are to be considered as outside the range of inspiration.

UNTENABLE PROPOSITIONS.

These, and all similar opinions, are untenable, and must be dismissed and rejected, because the undoubted teaching of the Church is that God is the real and actual Author of the *whole* of the Sacred Scriptures, and He can neither deceive nor be deceived, and cannot possibly inspire what is false or erroneous. Hence we hold, and, it seems, are obliged to hold, that there can be no genuine error, even in the incidental remarks or in the allusions to history or profane science. Pope Leo XIII. writes: "We cannot say that, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary Author. By supernatural power God so moved and impelled them to write—He was so present to them—that all the things which He ordered, and those things only, they first rightly conceived, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in adequate words and with infallible truth. Otherwise it could not be said that He is the Author of the whole of the Sacred Scripture, which has always been the persuasion of the Fathers. 'Therefore,' says St. Augustine, 'since they wrote the things which He showed and said to them, it cannot be said that it was not He

who wrote them. His members executed that which their Head dictated.' St. Gregory the Great maintains the same truth, in the following words: 'We loyally believe the Holy Ghost to be the Author of the Book. For He wrote it who dictated it to be written. He wrote it who inspired its execution'" (*Providentissimus Deus*). So again, in the same Encyclical, the Pope observes that "the Fathers are *unanimous* in laying it down that those writings, in their entirety and in all their parts, are equally from the Divine *afflatus*, and that God Himself, speaking through the sacred writers, could not set down anything that was not true". If but one certain and genuinely false statement were proved to exist within the pages of the inspired writings the whole authority of them would collapse. So says Melchior Canus and St. Augustine before him. Scotus, too, remarks that unless the Scriptures are *wholly* true the very authority of the Bible must be given up. "No error," observes St. Augustine, "is to be admitted in the Bible, not even concerning things of but little importance. . . . If any statement should *seem* contrary to truth, we must not accuse the Author of the Book of falsehood; we should rather conclude, either that (*a*) the text is

defective; or (*b*) that the interpreter has mistaken the meaning; or (*c*) that we have misunderstood."[1]

So, too, Professor Lamy writes: "We contend, with St. Jerome, that all parts of Holy Scripture are divinely inspired, even those parts which deal with matters purely historical and philosophical: and we hold that no really false statements, even concerning astronomy, chronology, geography, etc., are to be found in the sacred page".[2]

But it is unnecessary to quote other authorities, since, as we have already seen, the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., has himself spoken in unmistakable words in his "Litteræ Encyclicæ," *v.g. Providentissimus Deus.* He teaches that the inspired writings, as written

[1] "Nullus error, nequidem in rebus parvi momenti in Scriptura est admittendus. . . . Ibi, si quid velut absurdum moverit, non licet dicere: auctor hujus libri non tenuit veritatem; sed (*a*) aut codex mendosus est, aut (*b*) interpres erravit, aut (*c*) tu non intelligis" (*vide* Ep. 28 ad S. Hieron.; 3: Epis. 82, 3, 6, 24).

[2] "Cum S. Hieronymo propugnamus, omnes sacræ Scripturæ partes, etiam illas quæ facta mere historica, vel res philosophicas continent, esse divinitus inspiratas, adeoque in Scriptura nullam dari falsitatem nequidem in rebus philosophicis, chronologicis, astronomicis, geographicis" (Intro. in *Sacm. Scripturam*, auctore T. J. Lamy, p. 28, § 33).

down by the various hagiographers, are free from every kind of error (*ab omni omnino errore immunes*). And, in the plenitude of his authority, he declares that they who hold that error or falsehood is to be found in any part of the authentic Scriptures have either failed to grasp the real meaning of Divine inspiration, or else they make God Himself the Author of lies. In a matter of such importance it will be best to quote his very words: "Qui in Locis authenticis Librorum sacrorum quidpiam falsi contineri posse existiment, ii profecto aut catholicam divinæ inspirationis notionem pervertant, aut Deum Ipsum erroris faciant auctorem".

If it be objected, notwithstanding, that difficulties and even *seeming* contradictions and errors are to be met with in the inspired writings, there are several points we must carefully bear in mind.

First Caution.—When it is asserted that the whole Bible is inspired in every part, the assertion, in its full force, refers only to the original text, as it was taken down by the first writers. It does not refer directly either to copies or to translations. Hence neither the Vulgate (or authorised Latin translation) nor even the more ancient Septuagint can be

correctly said, strictly and formally, to be "inspired, in all its parts". Copies and translations (which, be it observed, are all we now have left to us) possess the authority of the original only *in so far* as they correspond with the original, and *inasmuch* as they contain what the original contains. The labour of translating the first texts, and even the mere mechanical task of copying them out, was not undertaken under any special assistance of the Holy Spirit. Hence certain discrepancies and contradictions may be met with, and even statements which are clearly errors of copyists.[1]

Second Caution. — As regards profane science, natural history and similar subjects we must bear in mind that God's purpose was not to reveal hidden truths of science, nor to teach geology and astronomy, but to instruct us in Divine things; His intention, as it has been quaintly expressed by Cardinal Baronius, was "not to teach us how the heavens go, but to teach us rather how to go to heaven". Consequently, the writers adopted and made use of the language and

[1] "It is true, no doubt, that copyists have made mistakes in the text of the Bible" (Leo XIII., *Providentissimus*).

the ideas current at the time, and employed expressions which best served to reveal their thought, even when such expressions were not (when taken literally) strictly true. Such forms of speech cannot be said, properly speaking, to contain error. Any one who should say that the Scriptures are false because they speak the language of the people rather than the language of science must be put down as unreasonable and captious. If we are to interpret each sentence according to the literal and strict signification of each word, instead of according to the accepted and common meaning that people have attached to it, we shall find that we are all telling lies every day.

Such observations, indeed, have their application in dealing with the language of ordinary people to-day quite as much as in bygone ages. Do we not frequently hear such expressions as, "I am *dying* to see you," or "I would *give anything* to go to Rome," or "Let us get on, if we stay here much longer we shall take root"? No one would say that persons using such expressions are guilty of falsehood. In the first illustration we do not take the expression "I am dying" as meaning that the speaker's life is in

real danger. Nor, in the second example, do we seriously think that the speaker would give literally "anything" to accomplish his purpose. He would not give, for instance, his whole estate, nor even a single member of his body. So, too, with regard to the third example, we at once recognise that the words, "we shall be taking root," are not to be accepted, except metaphorically.

It is very much the same thing in Holy Scripture. When we read: "Their camels were innumerable as the sand that lieth on the sea shore" (Jud. vii. 12), no one supposes that the comparison is exact; or that there was a camel to correspond to each grain of sand. When King David cries out: "My tears have been my bread, day and night" (Ps. xli. 4), or when we read: "All the earth desired to see Solomon's face, and to hear his wisdom" (3 Kings x. 24), we again know how to make allowance for the prevalent mode of speech. Take another illustration from Genesis vii. 19, in which it is stated: "All the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered" by the waters of the flood. Even here commentators do not consider it necessary to accept the statement altogether literally. Many take it to

mean all the mountains in the part of the earth known to man and occupied by man, and, consequently, truly "all" so far as he was concerned.

Nor is such an interpretation at all inconsistent or out of keeping with the ordinary interpretation of other similar passages. Thus Josue (ix. 24), speaking to the people, says: "God promised His servant Moses to give you ALL the land, and to destroy ALL the inhabitants thereof". And in Exodus x. 15 we are told that the locusts, called up by Moses, "covered the *whole face of the earth*, wasting ALL things". So, again, the Scripture informs us in another place that Nabuchodonosor said that his intention was "to bring *all the earth* under his empire" (Judith ii. 3). In none of the above sentences can we reasonably take the terms "all" and "whole" as literally exact. They are "colloquialisms," and, as such, are perfectly well understood and really true, in the sense in which they were received by the people. Do we not ourselves say of a big meeting, "O! the *whole* town was there!"

Take a somewhat different example. Some find fault with the expression which we come across in St. Matthew xxiv. 29: "The stars

shall fall from heaven," as though the Evangelist were making a preposterous and even an impossible statement. But here again St. Matthew is but speaking the language of the people, and need not be interpreted literally. He is referring to the general disturbances and dislocations of nature at the last day, and the appearances of the heavens, which will fill men with fear. The "stars" may be merely the fragments of some of the heavenly bodies attracted towards our earth, and which, entering our atmosphere in a state of incandescence, will seem like, and be taken for, stars falling. Why so much difficulty should be made about the employment of the word "star" in this connection we are at a loss to discover. We do not so criticise similar forms of speech when found in profane authors even in our own day. When the well-known writer Miller says: "This meteor moved with less rapidity than *falling stars* commonly do," or when Virgil, in the "Georgics," Book I., writes:

> And oft, before tempestuous winds arise,
> The teeming *stars fall headlong from the skies*,
> And, shooting through the darkness, gild the night
> With sweeping glories and long trains of light, etc.;

nobody makes any complaint. Or when Macgillivray assures us that "he found *falling stars*

more frequent in the equinoctial regions" than elsewhere, we never dream of accusing him of inaccuracy. If, then, profane writers may use the word "star" in a sense not strictly scientific, why may not the Apostle enjoy a similar liberty without unseemly accusations being hurled against him? However, even here we are not obliged to adopt the foregoing explanation. Some are of opinion that the Apostle is using figurative language. When they read: "The stars shall fall from heaven," their minds go back to that other scriptural passage in which it is said that the "tail of the dragon," or in other words the devil, "drew the third part of the *stars* of heaven and cast them to the earth" (Apoc. xii. 4). And they conclude, with much show of probability, that the evil spirits are referred to by St. Matthew in the first instance, as they are undoubtedly by St. John in the second instance; and that at the end of the world these spirits will come down upon the earth from the superior regions of the air which, it must be admitted, we quite commonly call the "heavens".

Or yet, a third explanation lies open to us, and it is one which seems to me the most obvious and natural. It is that the general dissolution and break up of nature will so dis-

arrange and dislocate the equilibrium of forces that the centres of gravity will be disturbed, and, as a consequence, the stars will leave their ordinary orbits, and be drawn (or, if you prefer it, will "fall") in various directions. Even though St. John referred to the actual stars, and even though he meant that they would indeed fall, yet there is nothing in the text to show that they must necessarily fall *on the earth.* Hence his words, like so many others to which persons object, contain no solid difficulty.

CHAPTER XI.

INTERPRETATION.

The Vatican Council teaches that "in things of faith and morals, belonging to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be considered the true sense of Holy Scripture, which has been held and is held by our Holy Mother the Church, whose place it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret Holy Scripture either against such sense, or against the unanimous agreement of the Fathers". By this most wise decree the Church by no means prevents or restrains the pursuit of biblical science, but rather protects it from error and largely assists its real progress. A wide field is still left open to the private student, in which his hermeneutical skill may display itself with signal effect and to the advantages of the Church.—POPE LEO XIII., *Providentissimus.*

WE have already had occasion to observe that the whole value of the words of Holy Writ lies in their meaning. Unless, in fact, we can correctly extract the Divine message that is enshrined in sentence and verse, we shall derive no profit from the most careful and continuous perusal of the inspired page, but rather the opposite.

Now the words of Scripture admit of

various interpretations. First, there is the literal sense. Secondly, there is the mystical sense. And thirdly, there is the accommodated sense (*sensus* "accommodatitius" or "accommodatus").

1. By the *literal* we mean that sense which the words directly and obviously bear. We get at the literal sense when we attribute to each word the meaning that naturally belongs to it. 2. The *mystical* sense, on the other hand, is figurative and spiritual, and contains several sub-divisions. It may be (*a*) allegorical, (*b*) analogical, (*c*) tropological, and so forth. 3. The accommodated sense is a sense which does not strictly and directly belong to Scripture at all. It is a sense which is merely *attributed* to words, when they are removed from their own context, and applied to a person or to an event in no way intended by the inspired writer. When, for instance, the Church applies to St. John the Baptist words which in themselves refer only to St. Jeremias, *e.g.* "Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5), we have an example of the "accommodated" sense. So again when she applies the

words of Solomon concerning Wisdom to the person of our Blessed Lady, as, for instance, the following: "My *fruit* is better than gold and the precious stone, and my blossoms than choice silver. I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment" (Prov. viii. 19 and 20). These words admit of a very true and beautiful application to the Immaculate Mother of God, the *fruit* of whose womb is Jesus Christ Himself, infinitely "better than gold and precious stones," but they were not, of course, written directly in reference to her. Spiritual and mystical writers are very fond of "accommodating" the words of the Bible for the purpose of impressing a truth by analogy, as may be seen by a glance at almost any of their works. And so long as this "sense by accommodation," as it is called by writers on hermeneutics, is used to enforce and illuminate truth and not falsehood, it serves an admirable purpose and adds grace and attraction to the doctrine that is being enforced.

We will not pause here to describe and to illustrate the allegorical, analogical and tropological senses, since it would occupy too much time. Let us rather point out that the Catholic Church is the only infallible and wholly reliable interpreter of the sacred books, and,

when differences arise as to the meaning of any passage, she and she only is the ultimate court of appeal. "The Church alone," says Cardinal Franzelin, "assisted by the Holy Spirit, can discern the word of God from that which is not the word of God, and she alone can declare its genuine meaning" (p. 193).

No private individual, however wise, may arrogate to himself the prerogative of determining the force and value and full content of any sentence of Holy Scripture. Of this fact we have abundant indications within the inspired Book itself. We have already referred to 2 Peter i. 20 and iii. 16, but there are many other passages in which the same truth is most clearly either expressed or implied. Thus (in Nehem. viii. 7) we read that "the Levites *caused* the people to understand the law". And (in Nehem. viii. 8) it is said that the priests "read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and *gave the sense, and caused them to understand* the reading". So again: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they (the people) should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. ii. 7). The same system holds under the New Law. "Go ye and *teach*" is the command of Christ to His

Church, and the right and duty of teaching certainly includes the right and the duty of explaining and interpreting. "We are of God," declare the Apostles, "and he that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John iv. 6). The test here pointed out by the Apostles shows even at this day that many have not the spirit of truth, but the spirit of error.

Pride and the love of independence, especially strong among us Englishmen, have caused many to reject this necessary discipline, even though its necessity is ever becoming more and more apparent. But the saints and the fathers of the Church, in spite of their great learning and ability and exceptional sanctity, were far too full of the Spirit of God, and far too humble of heart, to make any difficulty about such a regulation. St. Jerome, in spite of his profound erudition and his exalted reputation as a student of the Scriptures, observes that he, just as others, needs the assistance of the Church to safeguard him through the intricacies of Holy Scripture, and that he is not sufficient of himself. "I am not holier nor more learned," he remarks, in

his humility, "than the eunuch, who nevertheless sought instruction at the hands of Philip;" a pretty strong statement when we remember who St. Jerome was, and his profound knowledge of the sacred text. St. Augustine goes a step further still, for he confesses that within the covers of the Holy Bible "there is much more that he does *not* understand than there is that he *does* understand!" ("*multo nesciam plura quam sciam*"). Yet St. Augustine was one of the profoundest thinkers and one of the acutest observers that the world has ever seen.

How sad, then, and distressing it is to observe that non-Catholics, with neither the holiness nor the learning nor the experience of these saints, are conceited enough to imagine that they are quite capable of understanding the whole Bible, and may dispense with any assistance from any one.

No wonder God permits them to fall into all kinds of errors and extravagances, and to make shipwreck of the faith.

Non-Catholics sometimes accuse the Church of setting herself above the Bible, and reproach her for claiming in that way an authority superior even to God's own word! This sounds very dreadful, and it would be indeed

a most serious charge if it were really well-founded; but, when the accusation does not arise from pure malice and prejudice, it can be ascribed only to ignorance. The Catholic Church does not put herself above the word of God, nor would she for one single instant dispute or gainsay or criticise or find fault with anything that the Scripture *really teaches*. What she does often deny and denounce is not what the Bible teaches, but what this or that unauthorised individual falsely declares that it teaches, which is quite a different thing. She never questions the authority of Scripture, but she does most certainly and most justly question the authority of unscrupulous persons, who will insist upon attaching their own utterly perverse meaning to passages of Holy Scripture. She knows that Christ has commanded her to teach, and that He Himself has promised to guide her in all truth, and that she is therefore above, not the Bible, but above the whole mass of self-constituted and purely human interpreters of the Bible, however learned and wise. No man can teach her! But she can teach every man. No man can appeal from her to the Bible as though he were appealing to a higher authority, because to do so is not in reality to appeal to the

word of God at all. It is but to appeal from the infallible and divinely constituted interpreter of God's word to a wholly fallible and unauthorised interpreter of the word of God, which is a totally different thing. It is not a question of admitting or of rejecting a *statement*, since the statement is accepted by both the Church and her opponents, it is a question of who is best qualified to interpret the statement —the divinely constituted Church, or any self-sufficient upstart that has a view to air. In so far as the Bible is the test and measure of Divine truth it is not the Bible *unexplained*, but the Bible accurately and *authentically explained*. "Non Scriptura explicanda," as Franzelin expresses it, "sed Scriptura explicata" (p. 8). Hence the absurdity of certain Protestant controversialists, who first quote against us texts of Scripture, the whole adverse force of which is derived solely from their own wrongheadedness, and from the false sense they are pleased to attach to Divine words, and who then calmly declare that our doctrine is unscriptural. When the Church resists and disregards the texts that her adversaries cite against her, she is in no way resisting or disregarding the Bible or the word of God (as they try to make out), but

merely the impertinent and unwarrantable meaning that such men read into the text, and which they erroneously call the word of God, though in reality it is nothing more than the word of men, and often of very foolish and irresponsible men. The Church knows her position in the world; and as Christ has commanded her to teach all nations, she does teach, and will continue to teach, with full authority, to the end of time; but she herself will be taught of no man, since she is ever taught of God!

An upright and honest Catholic, who has a thorough knowledge of his religion, and who reads the Bible in a humble and submissive spirit, will derive immense profit from the exercise, and run very little risk; especially as he is not allowed to use any but approved editions, and such as are enriched with notes, in which the more obscure passages are explained.

In cases where the Church has not spoken, and concerning which the fathers and theologians are silent, he is at liberty to put upon the passage he reads the interpretation that it appears to him to bear—provided always that the said interpretation does not conflict with any doctrine of the Church.

This limitation is most reasonable and necessary, since the Church, being the official and divinely constituted teacher, any interpretation of a word or phrase inconsistent with her doctrine must necessarily be false and untenable. When, for example, in St. John xx. 23 we read: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained," we are absolutely certain that these words mean that the power of priestly absolution from sin was actually conferred upon the Apostles and their successors the bishops and priests of the Church, and we cannot explain these words away, or invest them with another meaning, as Protestants do, because the infallible teacher, with whom Christ promised to remain for ever, has already determined the point for us, and established their true and proper sense. So again, when we read the account of the Last Supper, and of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, we are bound to accept the words in their obvious, direct and literal meaning, since that is the sense in which the Church herself receives them, and has always authoritatively explained them. We should, in fact, be "wresting the Scripture to our own damnation" were we to explain them

away, to suit our own prejudices and personal feelings, as so many do outside the pale of the Catholic Church, who have nothing to guide them but their own extremely limited intelligence, too often the prey of passion and prejudice.

On the other hand, there are great tracts of unmapped country in the Scriptures over which we may wander with comparative freedom; I mean those parts upon which the Church has passed, so far as their interpretation is concerned, no decisive judgment. Such portions of Holy Writ are left free for the general reader to interpret for himself, provided always, of course, that he does not fasten upon them any meaning out of harmony with the teaching of the Church. By way of illustration, we may refer to the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, in which we are given a short sketch of the history of the material universe. The Church teaches, of course, that the statements to be met with in Genesis, as they came originally from the hagiographers, are inspired by the Holy Ghost; and that, in a word, God is their Author, just as He is the Author of the rest of the Holy Book. Consequently she teaches that they are in themselves true. The Church, how-

ever, has never yet offered us any clear, full and authoritative interpretation of the passages in question, but has left them to the study and consideration and investigation of men. As a result of this reticence the student of the Bible, commenting upon these passages, enjoys a certain liberty. He is free, at least to a certain extent, to exercise his industry and his ingenuity in his efforts to determine the actual meaning and true content of, let us say, chapters i. and ii. I say he is "free, *to a certain extent*" *only;* because, though the Church has not actually interpreted the verses under consideration, yet she has promulgated and taught many doctrines, which limit the scope of the enterprising commentator and confine him within due bounds. She, if we may so express ourselves, marks off a course for him. Within this course he may safely speculate and surmise, but beyond it he is not at liberty to stray.

Thus, among other doctrines, the Church teaches dogmatically (1) that God made the world; (2) that He made it out of nothing; (3) that He made it freely; (4) that the world is not eternal; (5) that the world is not a part of God; (6) that the Holy Spirit is not the soul of the world, and so forth.

Hence, any commentator who sets to work to unravel the difficulties of Genesis must remember that he is bound by the above decrees, and is under a strict obligation to steer clear of them. For, should he put upon the inspired words a meaning out of harmony or irreconcilable with any single doctrine already taught by the Church, that interpretation would be absolutely wrong, and did he persist in maintaining it he would make shipwreck of the faith.

If, for example, he were to contend that the world has come to be what it is without any intervention on the part of God, and by a process of development from eternity, he would fly into the very face of the Church's teaching. Or again, if he were so to explain the inspired words as to make it appear that the world is a part of God, or a mere emanation from God, or a manifestation of God, in the pantheistic sense, he would incur censure, because on these points the Church has already spoken, and, consequently, in that direction there is "no right of way". But as to other points, on which no authoritative pronouncement has been made, greater latitude is allowed. If, for instance, he has any new light to throw upon the meaning of the six

"days," and the value of the word "yôm"; or if he thinks he has discovered the genuine reason why the inspired writer always speaks of "the evening and the morning," instead of "the morning and the evening" of the various days, he is free to express his views and to put forth his arguments.

Indeed, it is precisely because the Church has passed no solemn judgment on the subject that we actually find a considerable number of totally different explanations of the opening chapters of the Bible offered by Catholics, whose learning and piety and loyalty to the Church are above all suspicion.

Let me enumerate a few. To begin with, we may point out that the cosmogony of the Bible, as taught by various orthodox writers, falls under three chief heads. First, there is the *Literal* Interpretation. Secondly, there is the *Concordist* Interpretation. Thirdly, there is the *Idealist* Interpretation. Each of these is quite distinct, and under each of these three distinct heads are several different varieties. The German writer Schœfer explains the Hexameron of Moses by a series of visions, in which God revealed to him the general history of creation in a succession of six representations or mental pictures, corresponding to

the six days mentioned in Scripture. This is known as the *Revelation* System.

Bishop Clifford, on the other hand, put forth what is called the *Hymn* System. He maintained that the opening chapter of Genesis is, in reality, nothing more than a sacred hymn, in which each day of the week is dedicated to the memory of one or another of the acts of God's creative power. So that "when it is said that certain acts were performed on certain days of the week it has no other signification," according to him, "than that the days are consecrated to the memory of the work in question". The Jesuit Hummelauer suggests yet another interpretation. Other students again, such as Michelis, Vigouroux, L'Abbé C. Robert, L'Abbé de Gryse, deal with the sacred text after their own fashion and conception. Meanwhile the Church keeps silent, for she is willing that in a matter so purely speculative each should "abound in his own sense," so long as no one transgresses the laws she has laid down nor contradicts her teaching. Indeed, as it has been observed with much truth by Rev. J. A. Zahm, C.S.C. : "We can have no better illustration of the perfect liberty of thought enjoyed by the children of the Church in all matters outside

of positive dogma than that afforded by the diversity of views entertained by saints and doctors respecting the true meaning of many controverted passages of the Mosaic cosmogony. Commentators have endeavoured to accommodate the declarations of the Hebrew law-giver to the scientific notions of their own time, and, as a consequence, we have in their interpretations a faithful reflex of all the speculations and vagaries that have at one time or another been put forth as genuine science. We often hear it said that believers in dogma and the Bible, especially Catholics, are so hampered by restrictions of all kinds that they are ever in a condition of intellectual thraldom. We are told that there are many questions in science that we, as Catholics, may not investigate, much less discuss, and that our religious beliefs forbid us to accept many of the demonstrated truths of science. I wish here and now to record, in the most emphatic manner possible, a formal and explicit denial of each and every one of these imputations, and to declare that they are utterly without foundation in fact. The example of the fathers and the schoolmen, and the commentators of every age of the Church, gives the lie to such foolish

declarations. In everything outside of revealed truth and the doctrinal teaching of the Church, they have shown us that they were ever permitted the greatest degree of latitude in exegesis, and that they always enjoyed the greatest possible measure of intellectual freedom." [1]

Before concluding this subject we should like to make two observations. The first is that it is impossible even for the most skilful artist to draw a portrait that shall *always remain* a true likeness of a person, who is constantly changing and developing. If the portrait is a perfect image of the person at ten years of age it cannot possibly be a perfect image of him at twenty years of age, still less at fifty years of age. The same difficulty meets us in Holy Scripture. The Bible narrative is fixed and unalterable, and science is ever changing and developing and discarding old theories and old explanations for new ones. Consequently it would be absurd and indeed outrageous to expect that the Bible, that changes not, should always be a true and perfect reflection of a science which never stands still, and which is ever correcting

[1] Rev. J. A. Zahm, C.S.C., in *Bible, Science and Faith,* pp. 38-39.

itself. If there were the most perfect and absolute agreement to-day between the Mosaic cosmogony and the teaching of science this agreement could not last; for science would continue to press forward, to strike out new lines, to make fresh discoveries, to correct mistaken notions, and to substitute modern explanations for obsolete theories. The only strict agreement that can reasonably be looked for is between Genesis on the one hand, and such general statements of science, on the other, as possess a more permanent value. To refer again to our illustration. If, instead of drawing a complete and perfect portrait of a man, an artist were to sketch simply the broad outline of his skeleton, and the general configuration of his bones and articulations, then the resemblance between the individual and the sketch would remain throughout all the changes of his life from youth to old age.

This, it would seem, is as much as we have any right to expect in Genesis, yet this, and even something more than this, we most certainly find. And though Genesis does not descend into minute particulars, yet the outline which it does give us would never be, and could never be, as accurate as it is, had the writer not received a revelation from God.

The concord and harmony between Moses' account and that of up-to-date scientists may not be perfect in every detail, but it seems absolutely impossible that it could be *as close and as accurate as it is* if Moses had received no supernatural light from God.

But, although it is very marvellous that Moses should have anticipated modern discoveries of astronomy and geology, even in so far as he incidentally touches on them ; yet, what is quite as inexplicable, on any hypothesis (save that of Divine inspiration), is that he should have set down the great events in their true chronological order—indeed this presents an insurmountable difficulty to any one who denies the supernatural character of the narrative.

The extent of the difficulty may not be apparent, at first sight, so perhaps the indulgent reader will allow me to draw it out a little, by means of an illustration.

We will, to start with, limit ourselves to two things, and then work our way up to the more complicated problem before us.

Take two propositions—*hens come from eggs*, and—*eggs come from hens.* Now the point we have to determine is which came first ; which was the actual and original order ? Was it

first the hen and then the egg, or *first the egg* and then the hen? Well, we really do not know! However, since there are only two possible alternatives, we should have an exceedingly good chance of giving a correct answer, even if we merely guessed. Whether we said the "egg," or the "hen," we should be quite as likely to be right as to be wrong.

But suppose we are called upon to decide the exact order in which not two but three things came into being, the difficulty would be enormously increased, and our chances of hitting on the right order would be comparatively slight, for, although there are only two ways of arranging two objects, there are no less than six ways of arranging three. Let A B C be three events. They might have come into existence, as follows, either

(1) A first, then B and lastly C or
(2) B „ „ C „ „ A or
(3) C „ „ A „ „ B or
(4) A „ „ C „ „ B or
(5) C „ „ B „ „ A or
(6) B „ , A „ „ C.

If, instead of three, we had four events to arrange, the chances of our arranging them in the proper order would be, not as one to six, but as one to twenty-four ; if we had five

events, our chances would be but one out of a hundred and twenty, but if the number of events were raised to, let us say, FIFTEEN, then we should have practically no chance at all of ever coming to a correct conclusion; for the simple reason that any series of fifteen may be arranged in more than a billion different ways! This may be proved mathematically by applying the law of mutations.

It will be best for the general reader if we put it graphically. Imagine then the fifteen letters of the alphabet (from A to O) to be printed upon slips of paper, and in every possible different order of which they are capable. We should then have a billion of slips, *all different*, and only one out of the whole correct. Out of such a number, what chance would any one have of selecting the right slip? Practically no chance whatever.

But even now it is impossible to grasp the full extent of the difficulty, since a billion is too vast a number for any man to realise. Some faint notion of it may be formed, possibly, if we put it this way. We will suppose a machine has been invented which throws out these slips of paper, duly marked, as rapidly as possible, let us say, one each successive second. We set the wheels in motion; the machine throws

out sixty slips in a minute; it throws out 3,600 in an hour; 86,400 in a day, and by the end of the first week it has thrown out 604,800. Now suppose the machine were capable of bearing the strain, and of continuing to throw off slips of paper *at the same rate*, how long do you suppose it would take before it could throw out a billion of these paper slips? Years? Centuries? Thousands of years? Yes. If the calculation be carefully made, it will be found that it would take more than 30,000 years![1]

This then is what we mean by a billion; and the chances of Moses being able (apart from revelation) to write down fifteen events, and to arrange them correctly *in the true order* of creation, and so as to correspond to modern science, are as a billion to one! Surely then Moses was not guided by fancy, or by chance or speculation, but by God Himself.

By consulting the following table the reader may see how the cosmogony of Moses agrees with science, at least in the broad outlines.

[1] Principal Kinn's illustration of "a clock beating seconds" has suggested the "machine" in the above paragraph.

THE FOLLOWING ORDER OF FIFTEEN CREATIVE EVENTS, AS TAUGHT BY SCIENCE, CORRESPONDS WITH THAT GIVEN BY MOSES.[1]

Primarily.—Science says that there is evidence to show that matter *existed first* in a highly attenuated ethereal condition, without any form, and *non-luminous*.

Moses says: "*And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep*".

I. Science: Astronomical facts go to prove that other worlds were formed before the solar system.

Moses: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*".

II. Science: Before condensation into their present form, the sun and planets existed as a *luminous* nebula.

Moses: "*And God said, Let there be light*".

III. Science: On the cooling of the earth some of the gases which surrounded it combined mechanically and chemically to form air and water.

Moses: "*And God said, Let there be a firmament*". (Literally, "an expansion".)

IV. Science: On further cooling great convulsions took place, which heaved up the rocks and raised them above the universal sea, forming mountains, islands and continents.

Moses: "*And God said, Let the dry land appear*".

[1] This table of comparisons is taken from S. Kinn's *Moses and Geology* (pp. 13 to 15).

V. Science: The earliest forms of vegetable life were evidently cryptogams, such as the algæ, lichens, fungi and ferns, which are propagated by spores and not by seeds. (Dr. Hicks states that he has found ferns in the Lower Silurian of Wales.)

Moses: "*And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass*". (Literal translation: "Let the earth sprout forth sproutage," which might be rendered *tender herbage*.)

VI. Science: Next succeeded the lowest class of phænogams, or flowering plants, called gymnosperms, from having naked seeds, such as the conifers. (Dana mentions coniferous wood being found in the Lower Devonian.)

Moses: "*The herb yielding seed*".

VII. Science: These were followed by a higher class of phænogams, or flowering plants, bearing a low order of fruit, found in the Middle Devonian and carboniferous strata.

Moses: "*And the fruit tree yielding fruit*". (The higher order of fruit trees appeared when "God planted a garden" later on.)

VIII. Science: The earth until after the Carboniferous period was evidently surrounded with much vapour, and an equable climate prevailed all over its surface; afterwards these mists subsided, and then the direct rays of the sun caused the seasons.

Moses: "*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, and let them be for signs and for seasons*".

IX. Science: After the Carboniferous period many fresh species of marine animals appeared, and the seas swarmed with life.

Moses: "*And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly*". (Literally, "swarm forth swarms".)

X. Science: In the New Red Sandstone footprints of birds are found for the first time.

Moses: "*And fowl that may fly above the earth*".

XI. Science: In the succeeding strata of the lias, monster marine saurians, such as the ichthyosaurus and plesiosaurus, are found.

Moses: "*And God created great whales*". (Should have been translated "sea-monsters".)

XII. Science: Enormous beasts, such as the megalosaurus, iguanodon and dinotherium, preceded the advent of cattle.

Moses: "*And God made the beast of the earth after his kind*".

XIII. Science: Cattle, such as oxen and deer, appeared before man; some of them in the Post-Pliocene period.

Moses: "*And cattle after their kind*".

XIV. Science: According to Agassiz the principal flowers, fruit trees and cereals appeared only a short time previous to the human race.

Moses: "*The Lord God planted a garden . . . and out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food*".

XV. Science: The highest and last created form of animal life was man.

Moses: "*And God created man in His own image*".

Finally. Science: As far as our present knowledge goes, no fresh species of plants or animals have appeared since the creation of man.

Moses: "*God ended His work which He had made*".

Whence did Moses get all this knowledge? How was it that he worded his rapid sketch with such scientific accuracy? If he, in his day, possessed the knowledge which genius and science have attained only recently, that knowledge must have been superhuman.

In a word, even though we are unable to make Genesis fit in with science in every minute particular, how is it possible to explain the agreement, even in the measure in which it does undoubtedly exist, without having recourse to a Divine revelation?

"We accept from science, as demonstrated," says Mr. W. E. Gladstone, "a series of geological conclusions. We have found the geology of Genesis to stand in such a relation to these conclusions as could not have been exhibited in a record framed by faculties merely human at any date to which the origin of the creation story can now reasonably be referred. Starting from this premiss, we have no means of avoiding or holding back from the conclusion that the materials of the story could not have been had without preterhuman aid; and such preterhuman aid is what we term Divine revelation."[1]

[1] *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, by Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, p. 218.

CHAPTER XII.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF EXISTING TEXTS.

If (any one) neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican (Matt. xvii. 17). . . . He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me (Luke x. 16).

As for me, I would not believe the Gospel, did not the authority of the Church determine me to do so.—*St. Augustine to the Manichæans.*

It has already been pointed out that the original Scriptures, as they came forth fresh from the hands of the inspired writers, no longer exist. How then, it may very reasonably be asked, can we feel any real confidence that the copies we now possess correspond with the originals? This question is, of course, of the utmost importance, because it is the originals only that are *directly* and immediately inspired. As we have already observed, the *copies* possess the authority of the originals only in so far as they agree with them; only in so far as they faithfully re-echo what they teach. When, for instance, I take up my

English Douai Bible, and say: "Here I have the very word of God, the very truths that God Himself has revealed," all I mean is that the English words and sentences before me accurately report and express the doctrine and the teaching of the original text, which is itself directly inspired. Hence, though the English *words* of the Douai Bible are not inspired, the *truths* that these words contain are inspired, since they are the very self-same truths which are contained in the original. It is only because the doctrines of the vernacular and of the original correspond that we can say with perfect truth: "This English Testament is the word of God". But how do we know that they correspond? Suffer me to point out that we have two guarantees which are enough, and more than enough, to satisfy any ordinary intelligent man. The first is an historical and the second is an ecclesiastical guarantee. Let me illustrate the first by a supposition, and then it will be more easily seen how strong our position is. I will suppose that King Edward VII. writes a letter, and addresses it to the soldiers who fought in South Africa. He thanks them for their services, he praises their valour, and he compliments them on their success. He promises to the most dis-

tinguished among them certain medals, which he has had especially struck, and he undertakes to increase their pay. The letter is sent out to Lord Roberts. This distinguished General is very much flattered at its reception, and commands it to be put up in a public place, where all the troops can see it and read it for themselves, to their hearts' content. For the sake of our argument, we must further suppose that the art of printing has not yet been invented. What happens? Well, the officers and men are very proud of the King's letter. Many of them come with pen, ink, and paper, and copy it out word for word. Many write to their friends at home and tell them all about it, and enclose copies. In this way copies taken by different hands find their way little by little all over England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia and the other colonies. Further, some of the French and German and Dutch soldiers get to see the document sent by the King, and they think it may interest or amuse their friends in France, Germany and Holland. So they translate it into their respective languages and send these translations to various towns in these three countries. Time passes. Centuries roll by. The King himself and all his

loyal soldiers have passed away. The original letter has long since decayed or been destroyed. But, lo! a copy is found in, let us say, the Museum in Capetown. It is indeed said to be a copy of the original. But how can we feel quite sure that the copy is reliable and exact? What proof have we that it really corresponds with the letter written in the King's own hand so many ages ago? If it were the only copy we might indeed have our doubts. But while the matter is being discussed we hear that there is another copy, by another hand, among the archives in the Record Office in London. We compare the two and find the text in each is exactly the same. Then a third copy is heard of in Edinburgh, and a fourth at Trinity College, Dublin, and a fifth in Cork; and, by degrees, no less than nine distinct copies come to light in various parts of Australia, and twenty-three copies, all by different hands, in different towns of Canada and the United States; we compare all these copies most carefully together, and we find that there is no real discrepancy between them, except that one copy out of the lot has omitted the word "of" between the word "King" and the word "England," so that it reads "King England"

instead of "King of England"—obviously an error of the copyist. Another has omitted the numeral "VII." after Edward, while two copies have written Edward VIII. instead of Edward VII.; and so forth.

Surely such a marked uniformity between one copy and another should be enough to satisfy us as to the true contents of the original letter, even though it cannot now be actually referred to.

But we pursue our investigations still further. Messengers are sent to France, Germany and Holland, and they consult the various ancient translations existing in those different places, and are delighted to find that they all, without exception, contain the same message and repeat the self-same statements with scarcely any perceptible difference. In Italy, we may suppose, a search is also made, and it turns out that there was an Italian translation, but it was destroyed in "the great fire," but several copies of this original translation are still extant, and they, too, when compared with the English, etc., are found to be practically the same.

Now, would any man in his senses, after collating all these versions, and noting their agreement, any longer doubt whether he had

King Edward's authentic message or not? The proof is clear and overwhelming. For it would be impossible for all those copies to agree so nearly, unless they were all accurately made. Even if every single writer, through carelessness or want of attention, were to go wrong, it would be impossible for all to go wrong exactly *at the same point, and exactly in the same manner!*

The above fable illustrates the history of the Bible. The original writings have indeed been lost; but long before they were lost, copy after copy, and translation after translation, had been made. And since the writings were held in the very highest possible esteem, the copies were made with greater care and attention than could have been bestowed upon any other book. They were treasured up with the most scrupulous zeal, and watched over with the utmost vigilance. The texts were read and re-read, and any fault, were it but of a single word or letter, would have at once arrested attention and have called down comment and correction. Manuscript copies and translations of the Bible are of various ages, and are to be found in all countries. They formed the bulk of most monastic and cathedral catalogues of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and

it is found that their contents are substantially one and the same, all the world over. The examination of these different copies, in many different languages, is a task of great difficulty and of enormous labour, yet the results of such undertakings have always been to confirm one's faith more and more in the genuineness of the text and to render assurance doubly sure.

When Dr. Kennicott was preparing his critical edition of the Hebrew Bible we are told that he consulted no less than 630 different manuscripts, while De Rossi collated considerably more than seven hundred. Six hundred different MSS. were carefully studied and compared when the last Greek Testament was brought out, and the agreement between them all was found to be most remarkable. Such slight differences and variations as were discovered here and there were never such as to interfere with the substance of the Divine message, or to create any serious doubt as to what was taught. No other ancient book can show such exceptional credentials or so prove its claim to accuracy. Even the pagan classics of Greece and Rome, which are accepted as genuine by our best scholars, have nothing like the same proofs to show. As an instance,

consider the case of Herodotus, the oldest Greek historian, who wrote more than four hundred years before Christ. This well-known classic, which is studied at almost all colleges and universities, is accepted as a genuine and accurate version of the original work, yet there are not twenty manuscript copies to be found, though we search the world over, and the very earliest of these dates only from the tenth century. The arguments employed may be sufficient to prove the genuineness of the text of Herodotus, but those that exist to prove the genuineness of the Bible are immeasurably stronger and more abundant and therefore immeasurably more than sufficient.

Another circumstance which goes very far to confirm the accuracy of the existing copies of the Bible is found in the frequent citations to be met with in the works of the Fathers and other weighty writers. From the very earliest centuries of Christianity the Bible, and especially the New Testament, was largely quoted by ecclesiastical writers, and every quotation we meet with adds yet a further confirmation to our belief. So continuously, and so largely, in fact, have the inspired words been cited, that it has been frequently asserted

that even if the New Testament had been utterly destroyed, the whole text might have been recovered from the works of the hundred and eighty ecclesiastical writers who existed before the seventh century. Sentences and passages of Holy Scripture are found running like veins of golden ore amid the substantial rock of their own valuable and learned compositions.

The above, as I am fully aware, represents but a very imperfect sketch of the solid basis upon which our belief in the genuineness of our present copies of the Bible so securely rests; but those who desire a more developed exposition of the arguments must consult for themselves the *magna opera* of the learned commentators and apologists.

Now we pass for a moment to the consideration of the ecclesiastical guarantee, *viz.*, the solemn and infallible judgment of the Church of God.

The Vulgate.

Before the members of the Œcumenical Council of Trent met together in solemn conclave, 1545-1563, there were several versions of the Sacred Scriptures in Latin in use among the clergy and laity throughout the world.

And though they were in substantial agreement, one with the other, yet there were many verbal differences and discrepancies between them. The divisions of the verses, the punctuation, the arrangements of the words, the forms of expression and the turn of the phrases were often at variance. In a book so universally used, so constantly quoted, and so incessantly referred to by Catholic teachers and preachers, and writers and apologists and disputants, in every part of the Church, this was found to be extremely awkward and inconvenient. It was strongly felt that some one definite translation of the Bible, in the language of the Church (*i.e.*, Latin), should be determined upon, as the *standard Bible*, recognised by ecclesiastical authority, to which all might appeal with security, and whose text all should be obliged to accept as authoritative and true. The Fathers of the Council took the matter up, and a decree was accordingly passed in favour of what is known as the Vulgate. This superseded the more ancient version, known as the Italic, and indeed every other translation also, at least in so far as the Latin Church is concerned. The Council declared it to be authentic and prescribed its use in all controversies, public readings, and in

sermons and lectures; and commanded that no one, under any pretext whatsoever, should presume to reject it, or to deny its authority.

In a word, just as it is the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church alone, that determines what books constitute the original Bible; just as she, and she alone, can declare with infallible certainty what writings are inspired and what are not inspired, so she, too, can and does determine, with unerring certainty, that this particular translation contains the genuine revelation and word of God.

The solemn promise made by Christ Himself that the Holy Spirit should assist and direct His Church to the end of time, and lead it in all truth, and that He Himself would abide with it *for ever*, necessarily includes this much. "The same infallible assistance of the Holy Spirit which safeguards the Church when determining what are inspired writings," says Cardinal Franzelin, "safeguards her also when declaring what versions are conformable in faith and morals to the original" (*De Trad.*, p. 459).

The command to "teach all nations" the true and unadulterated doctrines of Christ was rendered possible only by the fact that God undertook to be with His divinely constituted teacher, to the very end of the world.

"Behold I am with you all days"; and this command to teach includes the teaching of the written word as well as of the unwritten word (tradition) and consequently extends to the Scriptures, such as they now exist.

The decree runs as follows: "The Holy Synod makes known, decrees and declares, that the said ancient Vulgate edition of the Bible, whose use has been approved of, for so many centuries, throughout the Church, in public readings, disputations, sermons and expositions, is to be accepted as authentic, and let no one dare, on any pretext whatsoever, to reject it".

A few words explaining the force of the decree may here be useful. In the first place, the Fathers of the Council do not deny or reject the authority of the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures, for these versions did not come under their consideration ("Nihil de Graecis vel Hebraicis agebatur"). The question before them was simply to determine which among the many *Latin* versions should be accepted as the genuine orthodox and authoritative one.

Secondly, the Fathers of the Council, in deciding upon the present Vulgate, did not undertake to declare that it was free from error of every kind, but merely that its con-

formity with the original text was such that it was free from every error which could, of itself, engender or lead to any false teaching concerning faith or morals ("Nullo eam foedatam esse errore, ex quo perniciosum aliquod dogma in fide et moribus colligi posset"). Hence, to say that there are no mistakes of grammar, no false dates, no slips of the pen, no discrepancies, no errors in history or science or geography, no ambiguity or inaccuracy of language in dealing with profane things, would be to say a good deal more than the Œcumenical Council of Trent ventured to say. To such a statement the Church has in no way committed herself. Indeed the Church, in issuing the decree, was not concerned with the exposition of profane science, but solely with the safeguarding of the faith and morals of her children; consequently, in drawing up her laws and regulations regarding the Vulgate edition of the Sacred Scriptures, she made no dogmatic statement as to the exactness and accuracy of the Vulgate when dealing with profane and purely secular matters, whether of astronomy or natural history or anything else, but solely as to its accuracy when dealing with all matters concerning faith and morals.

Hence it may be laid down, in the words of R. Cornely, S.J., that every Catholic is bound to hold that the Vulgate is declared to be authentic and the true and genuine source or spring (*fons*) of revelation, in such wise, that it is not only free from all that is false in faith and morals, but also in the sense that it actually and faithfully expresses all that appertains to the substance of the original and divinely inspired text ("Omnia illa, quæ ad verbi Divini scripti substantiam pertinent, fideliter exprimat," p. 453, § 175. Introd., vol. i.). Cardinal Franzelin expresses the same truth in somewhat different words when he teaches that the conformity which the Church declares to exist between the Latin Vulgate and the original text is such that so far as their substance is concerned the two books are identical ("Sufficit admittere conformitatem Vulgatae cum Scriptura primitus inspirata ita, ut maneant quoad substantiam libri identici."[1] *De Traditione*, p. 467).

[1] Le P. L. Méchineau says that "L'ancienne Vulgate latine doit être tenue pour authentique, c'est-à-dire, non pas seulement pour officielle, comme l'interprètent quelques auteurs, mais encore, pour fidèle, conforme aux textes originaux quant à la substance des livres et des parties intégrantes de chaque livre précédemment déclarées canoniques," *Etudes*, 20 Avril, 1899, p. 193.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be well to say a few words regarding the absurd caricature of Catholic doctrine with which some of even the cleverest of our Protestant friends occasionally regale us. Indeed, we are constantly meeting with misstatements of the most glaring and outrageous kind in books published, not by obscure men, but by lecturers and professors and men of light and leading, at least in their own sect. Such persons may talk reasonably and learnedly enough about other matters, but when they take upon themselves to instruct their readers on matters of Catholic teaching and Catholic doctrine, they seem to think that they may say anything that first comes into their heads, and that they are bound by no obligations of accuracy or of truthfulness towards the oldest and vastest Christian community in the world. As an instance, I will take a small volume that chanced to fall into my hands, entitled *The Old Documents of the New Bible.* When I read the title-page and saw that it was by J. Paterson Smyth, LL.B., B.D., Senior Moderator and Gold Medallist, Primates' Hebrew Prizeman, etc., and author of *How We Got Our Bible,* and so forth, I acknowledge that I did expect to find, in every point

treated, some degree of accuracy. But I was woefully disappointed.

When this "gold medallist" gets on the subject of the Catholic Church, he displays not only a rancour but an ignorance of which even an ordinary Catholic schoolboy might justly be ashamed. His sketch of the Catholic doctrine of Papal infallibility is a perfect caricature. But, what is worse, having drawn his caricature, he proceeds to invite his readers to laugh and poke fun at it, though in reality the only things to provoke laughter are the grotesque absurdities of the author himself. On page 175 he writes: "Pope Sixtus V. undertook to bring out a correct edition of the Bible. His method was a very simple one indeed. He got together a company of learned revisers, but with this understanding—that their functions were merely to collect manuscripts and prepare the evidence for and against certain readings in the text, after which the Pope himself, *not by reason of his scholarship, but of his gift of infallibility*, decided straight off which were the genuine words!" This statement, needless to say, is wholly and absolutely false. But let us read on: "He decreed also that all readings varying from his edition should be rejected as in-

correct; that it should never be altered in the slightest degree, under pain of the anger of God and His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and if any man presumed to transgress this mandate, he was to be placed under the ban of the major excommunication, not to be absolved except by the Pope himself". Mr. J. Paterson Smyth might have spared himself writing this arrant nonsense had he taken the trouble to learn the value of theological terms, and the technical language of the Church. But, quite unconscious of wearing the cap and bells, he goes on with the utmost gravity to remark that "scholars who examined the new book very soon learned, if they did not know it before, that, as there was no royal road to learning, so was there also no Papal road to criticism. The book was full of mistakes. The scholarship of Sixtus was by no means great, and his infallibility (!) somehow failed to make up for this defect." Mr. Smyth then quotes Dr. Salmon, who is about as reliable and as accurate an exponent of Catholic doctrine as himself, and whose book on "Infallibility" has been literally turned inside out by the Very Rev. Dr. Murphy, V.F. (Macroom), in the pages of the *Irish Eccl. Record*.[1]

[1] A.D. 1901, March number, *et seq.*

Let me then state for Mr. Smyth's information that the Pope's gift of infallibility cannot be exercised upon, nor applied to, any questions but such as refer to faith and morals. To pretend that the Pope is infallible in deciding a point of grammar or philology or textual criticism, as such, or in determining what is or what is not a correct Greek or Hebrew construction, etc., is to display a lamentable ignorance of the whole doctrine of infallibility. As well say that the Pope is infallible in deciding questions of astronomy or chemistry. Really, one has a right to expect an LL.B and B.D. to restrain his pen, unless he knows, at least, *something* about what he is writing. Let men like Mr. Smyth and Dr. Salmon publish books and argue and protest against the Catholic Church to their hearts' content, if they so wish; but let them not misstate her doctrines, misrepresent her teaching, or ridicule her for saying what she does not say, and for propounding doctrines which she does not propound. It is intolerable that the Church should suffer not only from their hostility and their hate, which signify perhaps little, but from their ignorance and their false charges, which signify a good deal. Really, these good men seem to have

no consciences and no sense of what is due to even an opponent; for they hurl their poisonous accusations against her without even taking the trouble to ascertain whether there is any foundation for them or not. This readiness to believe ill of the Church, this haste to assume as true whatever is to her discredit, this eagerness to convert into an argument against her what can be, at best, but a vague suspicion, is one of the most deplorable characteristics of Protestantism. It constitutes one of the difficulties against which we have to be for ever and ever contending. For, what the vast majority of men who are opposed to the Church hate is, not the doctrines which she *really* teaches, but those false and absurd doctrines which lying tongues keep on declaring that she teaches, which is a wholly different thing. It is to be feared that there is but little true charity among such persons, for "Charity *thinketh* no evil," still less does it *invent* evil.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BIBLE AND THE SECTS.

Mr. W. H. Mallock is not a Catholic, but he is a shrewd observer, and often expresses Catholic doctrines, not only accurately, but in a manner to arrest attention, and almost to command assent. In 1900 he published an exceedingly interesting book entitled *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*, in which he contrasts the perfectly logical position of the Catholic Church with the hopelessly illogical position of the various sects, more especially the Anglican. His testimony, as coming from an outsider, is so valuable that I propose, in this concluding chapter, to speak rather by his lips than by my own.

All Protestants of course believe in the Bible, but, as Mr. Mallock very emphatically insists, "until they can tell us definitely, coherently and fully on what foundations their belief and their interpretations of the Bible rest, all the emphasis they expend in asserting their

rival doctrines is as meaningless as the crowing of cocks in a farmyard" (p. 76). Now, if we proceed to inquire what these foundations are, we shall find that "some will declare that their faith rests on (1) the unanimous consent of the Church during *all* periods of its existence; others, that it rests on (2) the doctrines and practices of the Church during the *earlier* periods of its existence; others, that it rests on (3) the individual study of the Bible as the *only* inspired book; and (4) others, that it depends upon the individual study of the Bible as the *best* of inspired books" (p. 77). Such are the answers of the various sects as described by Mr. Mallock. He then goes on to observe that "there is yet another answer, which all these four answers absolutely agree in repudiating, and this is the answer given by the Church of Rome.

"The Church of Rome, when asked on what grounds we are to believe in the Bible, and by what means, believing in it, we are to discriminate its true meaning, answers us that these grounds and means are the Roman Church itself, which is an ever living and ever infallible teacher, the same Church to-day as it was on the day of Pentecost; and which, though it speaks officially at distant intervals

only, so speaks, when it does speak, in a manner which all can recognise, thus progressively defining the faith, as successive definitions become necessary. This claim to a living infallibility, with a definite organ of utterance, which is made by the Church of Rome, is denied by all Anglicans equally." In fact, as Mr. Mallock goes on to point out, "the denial of it is *almost the only point, except the existence of God*, with regard to which all Anglicans remain really unanimous; and here their unanimity is more than real—it is passionate. It is a point of brotherly and intimate spiritual agreement between Lord Halifax and the gentleman whom he calls a blaspheming brawler, Mr. Kensit" (p. 78). It is, of course, a well-known historical fact, that all the sects, at the time of the "Reformation," made the Bible the only supreme spiritual authority in the world; and they did this because, being but human themselves, they were unable to look into the distant future, to discern the signs of the times, and to see upon what a treacherous and sandy bank they were building, and how soon it was destined to crumble away. But to resume our quotation: "Slowly, and yet inevitably, the centuries have wrought their changes. That old foundation, the Bible,

has ceased, *in itself*, to be a foundation any longer. It moves, it shifts, it totters. It will support no structure, unless *something outside itself* shall be found which will support *it*. That something the Roman Church supplied; and now reformed Christendom is beginning at last to find that, for that something which it rejected and still rejects, it is necessary to find a substitute" (p. 79).

Mr. Mallock then goes on to examine and to test the various human substitutes, such as the intuitional theory, the theory of the primitive Church, and of the *consensus* of all ages, and so forth. He shows quite plainly that they are not merely wholly inadequate, but that they contradict each other.

The intuitional is rendered impossible by the conflicting character of its conclusions, which land us in a fog. The theory of the consensus of all the so-called Churches fails, because there is no consensus among the Churches that can ratify it. For instance, "it starts with asserting that the English Church is a body forming an integral part of an undivided whole, of which the Church of Rome is another part, and that they share the guidance of some mystical consensus between them. Now it is plain, from its own terms, that if this theory is to

have any weight at all, this theory must itself be ratified by a consensus of the mass of those who are referred to in it. But is such the case? On the contrary, by an overwhelming majority of them, it is absolutely denied and repudiated. It is absolutely denied and repudiated by the whole of the *Church of Rome, which is twice as numerous as all the Protestant communions in the world;* and this is not all, for, what is still more striking, it is similarly denied and repudiated by the majority of Protestants themselves" (p. 90). How utterly useless, then, it must be to point to such a theory at all.

Mr. Mallock, throughout some forty pages, goes on to show that none of the sects have so much as an inch of solid ground to stand on.

Even though we should admit the theory of "the general consensus of the Churches" as affording ground solid enough, it would not really help us, for there is no general *consensus* that such a principle is true. It may, in fact, be said to be a principle peculiar to the Ritualists.

"The Ritualists, however, even according to the most sanguine computation, cannot possibly comprise more than ten million persons; whilst

the Roman Church comprises more than two hundred millions. If then a consensus of more than *two hundred* million Christians has not of itself sufficient authority to establish a theory (*i.e.*, the Catholic theory), which is absolutely clear and logical and has all tradition at the back of it, how can a consensus of *ten* millions be sufficient to establish another, which all Christians of all other kinds repudiate, which tradition fails to support, and logic to state intelligibly? By no possible gerrymandering of the spiritual constituencies of Christendom can the Ritualists' theory put itself on any plausible basis; and even if ingenuity could devise a plausible basis to support it we should find that there was nothing definite, nothing intelligible, for it to support" (p. 133). Thus, Mr. Mallock makes short work of the whole Protestant position, and shows how senseless it is.

Further, if we compare the three great Protestant criterions of religious truth, we shall find that they actually contradict each other. "If (*a*) the primitive Church is really our sole authority, the (*b*) interior witness and the (*c*) consensus are not authorities at all; and if the (*c*) consensus of all the Churches is the sole authority that is sufficient, the (*a*)

primitive Church is an imperfect authority, and (*b*) the interior witness an untrustworthy one" (p. 141). However, "utterly inefficient as these Anglican theories are, hopelessly inconsistent as they are, alike with themselves and with one another, we have only to supplement them with the assumption of one principle more, and we shall find that suddenly their whole character changes. They cease to be inefficient, they cease to be contradictory. They become consistent with themselves; they coalesce with, and support, each other; and they form together a logical and luminous whole. . . . The additional principle, by the assumption of which this remarkable change will be accomplished, is the principle which is logically the basis of the Roman system of theology, and to understand it we must go to the Roman Church" (p. 142).

"This principle is the assumption on the part of the teaching body, that, as a teaching body—as a corporation that never dies—it always has been, is, and always will be, infallible. Now the first fact which we shall realise, when we consider how this principle is applied, is that it gives us what is practically the Anglican theory of the consensus, changed only by being rendered logical, effective and complete. The

Anglican theory, by the addition to it of this principle, is affected precisely as a wheel without an axis is affected by having an axis supplied to it; or, as a bridge with an arch wanting is, for practical purposes, affected by having the missing arch built. The Anglican theory makes the consensus useless, because it is obliged to deny it, or at all events is unable to endow it with the three primary things essential to its practical utility—namely, an endorsement by itself of the claim the theory makes for it; some means of stating and recording the decisions at which it arrives; and an undisturbed continuity of authority from the earliest times till now. All these three wants the Roman principle supplies. In the Councils it provides the consensus with a definite organ of utterance; by limiting the consensus to the Roman Church itself it secures for it its own evidence in favour of its own authority, and the unbroken continuity of this authority it vindicates by the same means. Thus metamorphosed and vitalised by the logical completion of itself the theory of the consensus, so useless in Anglican hands, becomes (in the Catholic and Papal Church) everything that Anglicans in vain try to make it. But the effect of the Roman principle does

not end here. Besides completing and vitalising the Anglican theory of the consensus, it completes, vitalises and unites with this same theory those two other Anglican theories which, taken by themselves, are so inconsistent with it—the theory of the authority of the primitive Church, and the theory of the interior witness" (pp. 143-144).

"Rome," continues Mr. Mallock, and it is pleasant to be able to quote so impartial an observer, "is the only Church representing itself as an ever-living and articulate individual, which at no period of its existence has lost any one of its faculties, but is able every day to reaffirm, with a living voice, every doctrine which it has ever authoritatively enunciated in the past—to reaffirm it now in virtue of the same supernatural knowledge; and to reaffirm it, moreover, with an ever-deepening meaning.

"Finally, let us note that the Roman theory of infallibility—of the divinely guided teaching power of the consensus of the entire (Catholic) Church—is the only theory of a consensus which starts with the advantage of being confirmed, instead of contradicted, by the very authority which it itself invokes" (p. 158). Two pages further on follows a statement of unquestionable truth, yet very re-

markable as coming from a non-Catholic: "When we examine Rome's claim to be that one Catholic Church to which *Christ promised the infallible and unending guidance of the Spirit*, and when we analyse the assumptions and principles of which this claim is composed, we shall find that these assumptions and principles are precisely those which are *logically required* in order to enable a Church to sustain this unique character; and that all the other Churches, which have either lost or rejected them, are logically unable to make the least pretence to it. Rome, in fact, in its capacity of the one infallible teacher, resembles a sailor in a shipwreck, who alone of all his companions has retained the swimming apparatus with which all were originally provided, and who, when derided by his companions for boasting that he alone can swim, answers them by continuing on the surface, whilst they, one and all, go under it" (p. 160).

No one who realises and heartily accepts the unique position of the Catholic Church, founded on the rock, Peter; no one who bears in mind the promise made by the Divine and veracious lips of God Incarnate that the gates of hell should never prevail against it, can have any misgiving as to the sufficiency of her

authority in determining all that concerns the composition, integrity, inspiration, interpretation, authenticity, and trustworthiness, etc., of the Holy Bible, of which she has ever been the zealous and devoted custodian and the infallible expositor.

THE END.

INDEX.

Authentic Latin version, 251, 253.

Bible-reading recommended by the Church—See Author's Preface.
"Bible," origin of the word, 1, 2.
Bible, its original form, 2, 3.
Bible, its colloquial style, 5.
Bible, originally without vowels and punctuation, 8, 9.
Bible, often inaccurately copied, 10-15.
Bible, English and Catholic versions, 18-20.
Bible, its many interests, 21.
Bible, the *original* manuscript nowhere exists, 9, 240.
Bible, its trustworthiness, how proved, 241, 242.
Bible, quoted by the Fathers and preachers, 247.
Bible and the Sects, 259.
Bible in Middle Ages, 188-189.
Bible, corrupted by Protestants, 81.
Bible, why not translated earlier, 82-85.
Bible alone not sufficient, 16, 89-96.
Bible, dishonoured by Protestants, 156-169, 183.
Bible, honoured by Catholics, 169-175, 186-188.
Bible, verification of, 126, 130-142.
Bible needs an interpreter, 66-72.

Card. Logue's appreciation of the present work, iv, v.
Catacombs, the, 130 *et seq.*

Church and the Bible, 78-79.
Coincidences, Undesigned, 143-155.

Difficulties of interpretation illustrated, 56, 59, 61, 66, 67.

Errors, how they arise, 12, 13.

Genesis, 231-239.
Gladstone quoted, 116-117.

Huxley, Professor, 115.

Inspiration of the Bible, 193-213.
Inspiration, how far does it extend, 197, 204, 205.
Inspiration, opinions which must be rejected, 202.
Inspiration, *first* caution, 206.
Inspiration, *second* caution, 207.
Interpretation, various kinds, 215, 227-228.
Interpretation, no *private*, 217.
Interpretation, St. Jerome and St. Augustine on, 219.
Interpretation, Franzelin on, 221.
Interpretation of "Woman, what have I to do with thee," 101-106.
Interpretation of "The Just Man liveth by Faith," 107-109.
Interpretation of "Joseph knew her not, till, etc.," 110, 111
Interpretation of the "Gadarene swine," 115-118.
Interpretation of "Search the Scriptures," 26-27.

Latin Bibles, 84-85.

Mallock Mr. W. J., quoted, Chapter XIII.
Martin Luther and his *first*? translation, 8.

Objections answered, 46, 122, 127.
Old Testament, its main purpose, 22-23.
Old Testament, prophecies concerning Christ, 29-44.

Paschal Lamb, objection answered, 46-47.
Pope Pius VII and H. Scriptures, xii.

Tradition, 93-95.
Translations, 14, 15.

Unity of the Church, 69-70.
Vulgate, the, 248; is authentic, 251.

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